MISTRESS ANNE

TEMPLE BAILEY

15

Christmas - 1917 -

Anne

from

Dr. + Mrs Learned.

SHE SHOWED HIM HER SCHOOL

MISTRESS ANNE

BY

Temple Bailey

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"Glory of Youth" "Contrary Mary"

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Mistress Anne

To

P. V. B.

who sees the sunsets

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Mistress Anne

CHAPTER I

In Which Things Are Said of Diogenes and of a Lady With a Lantern.

THE second day of the New Year came on Saturday. The holiday atmosphere had thus been extended over the week-end. The Christmas wreaths still hung in the windows, and there had been an added day of feasting. Holidays always brought people from town who ate with sharp appetites.

It was mostly men who came, men who fished and men who hunted. In the long low house by the river one found good meals and good beds, warm fires in winter and a wide porch in summer. There were few luxuries, but it pleased certain wise Old Gentlemen to take their sport simply, and to take pride in the simplicity. They considered the magnificence of modern camps and clubs vulgar, and as savoring somewhat of riches newly acquired; and they experienced an almost æsthetic satisfaction in the contrast between the rough cleanliness of certain little lodges along the Chesapeake and its tributary

tide-water streams, and the elegance of the Charles Street mansions which they had, for the moment, left behind.

It was these Old Gentlemen who, in khaki and tweed, each in its proper season, came to Peter Bower's, and ate the food which Peter's wife cooked for them. They went out in the morning fresh and radiant, and returned at night, tired but still radiant, to sit by the fire or on the porch, and, in jovial content, to tell of the delights of earlier days and of what sport had been before the invasion of the Philistines.

They knew much of gastronomic lore, these Old Gentlemen, and they liked to talk of things to eat. But they spoke of other things, and now and then they fell into soft silences when a sunset was upon them or a night of stars.

And they could tell stories! Stories backed by sparkling wit and a nice sense of discrimination. On winter nights or on holiday afternoons like this, as, gathered around the fire they grew mildly convivial, the sound of their laughter would rise to Anne Warfield's room under the eaves; she would push back the papers which held her to her desk, and wish with a sigh that the laughter were that of young men, and that she might be among them.

To-day, however, she was not at her desk. She was taking down the decorations which had made the little room bright during the brief holiday. To-

morrow she would go back to school and to the forty children whom she taught. Life would again stretch out before her, dull and uneventful. The New Year would hold for her no meaning that the old year had not held.

It had snowed all of the night before, and from her window she could see the river, slate-gray against the whiteness. Out-of-doors it was very cold, but her own room was hot with the heat of the little round stove. With her holly wreaths in her arms, she stood uncertain in front of it. She had thought to burn the holly, but it had seemed to her, all at once, that to end thus the vividness of berry and of leaf would be desecration. Surely they deserved to die out in that clear cold world in which they had been born and bred!

It was a fanciful thought, but she yielded to it. Besides, there was Diogenes! She must make sure of his warmth and comfort before night closed in.

She put on her red scarf and cap and, with the wreaths in her arms, she went down-stairs. The Old Gentlemen were in the front room and she had to pass through. They rose to a man. She liked the courtliness, and gave in return her lovely smile and a little bow.

They gazed after her with frank admiration. "Who is she?" asked one who was not old, and who, slim and dark and with a black ribbon for his eye-glasses, seemed a stranger in this circle.

"The new teacher of the Crossroads school. There wasn't any place for her to board but this. So they took her in."

"Pretty girl."

The Old Gentlemen agreed, but they did not discuss her charms at length. They belonged to a generation which preferred not to speak in a crowd of a woman's attractions. One of them remarked, however, that he envied her the good fortune of feasting all the year round at Peter Bower's table.

Anne, trudging through the snow with the wreaths in her arms, would have laughed mockingly if she had heard them. It was not food that she wanted, not the game and oysters and fish over which these old gourmands gloated. What she wanted was the nectar and ambrosia of life, the color and glow—the companionship of young things like herself!

Of course there were the school children and there was Peggy. But to the children and Peggy she was a grown-up creature. Loving her, they still made her feel age's immeasurable distance, as she had felt her own distance from the Old Gentlemen.

It was Peggy, who, wound in her mother's knitted white shawl until she looked like a dingy snowball, bounced from the kitchen to meet her.

"Where are you going?" she asked.

The young teacher laughed. "Peggy," she said, "if you will never tell, you may come with me."

"Where?" demanded Peggy.

"Across the road and into the woods and down to the river."

"What are you carrying the wreaths for?"

"Wait and see."

The road which they crossed was the railroad. Over the iron rails the trains thundered from one big city to another, with a river to cross just before they reached Peter Bower's. Very few of the trains stopped at Peter's, and it was this neglect of theirs, and the consequent isolation, which constituted the charm of Bower's for town-tired folk. Yet Anne Warfield always wished that some palatial express might tarry for a moment to take her aboard, and whirl her on to the world of flashing lights, of sky-scraping towers and streaming crowds.

"What are you going to do with the wreaths?" Peggy was still demanding as they entered upon the frozen silence of the pine woods.

"I am going down as close as I can to the water's edge, and I am going to fling them out as far as I can into the river. And perhaps the river will carry them down to the sea, and the sea will say, 'Whence came you?' and the wreaths will whisper, 'We came from the forest to die on your breast, the river brought us, and the winds sang to us, and above us the sky smiled. And now we are ready to die, for we have seen life and its loveliness. It would have been dreadful if we had come to our end in the ashes of a little round stove.'"

Peggy stared, open-eyed. She had missed the application, but she liked the story.

"Let me throw one of them," she said.

"You couldn't throw them far enough, dear heart. But you shall count, 'one, two, three' for me. And when you say 'three' I'll throw one of them away, and then you must count again, and I will throw the others."

So Peggy, quite entranced by the importance of her office, took her part in the ceremony, and Anne Warfield stood on top of the snowy bank above the river, and cast upon its tumbling surface the bright burden which it was to carry to the sea.

It was at this moment that there crossed the bridge the only train from the north which stopped by day at Peter Bower's. The passengers looking out saw, far below them, sullen stream, somber woods, and a girl in a gay red scarf. They saw, too, a dingy white dot of a child who danced up and down. When the train stopped a few minutes later at Bower's, six of the passengers stepped from it, three men and three women, a smartly-dressed, cosmopolitan group, quite evidently indifferent to the glances which followed them.

Anne and Peggy had no eyes for the new arrivals. If they noticed the train at all, it was merely to give it a slurring thought, as bringing more Old Gentlemen who would eat and be merry, then hurry back again to town. As for themselves, having finished

"YOU COULDN'T THROW THEM FAR ENOUGH"

the business of the moment, they had yet to look after Diogenes.

Diogenes was a drake. He lived a somewhat cloistered life in the stable which had been made over into a garage. He had wandered in one morning soon after Anne had come to teach in the school. Peter had suggested that he be killed and eaten. But Anne, lonely in her new quarters, had appreciated the forlornness of the old drake and had adopted him. She had named him Diogenes because he had an air of searching always for something which could not be found. Once when a flock of wild ducks had flown overhead, Diogenes had listened, and, as their faint cries had come down to him, he had stretched his wings as if he, too, would fly. But his fat body had held him, and so still chained to earth, he waddled within the limits of his narrow domain.

In a cozy corner of the garage there was plenty of straw and a blanket to keep off draughts. Mrs. Bower had declared such luxury unsettling. But Anne had laughed at her. "Why should pleasant things hurt us?" she had asked, and Mrs. Bower had shaken her head.

"If you had seen the old men who come here and stuff, and die because their livers are wrong, you'd know what I mean. Give him enough, but don't pamper him."

In the face of this warning, however, Anne fed the old drake on tidbits, and visited him at least once a

day. He returned her favors by waiting for her at the gate when it was not too cold and, preceding her to the house, gave a sort of major-domo effect to her progress.

Entering the stable, they found a lantern lighting the gloom, and Diogenes in a state of agitation. His solitude had been invaded by an Irish setter—a lovely auburn-coated creature with melting eyes, who, held by a leash, lay at length on Diogenes' straw, with Diogenes' blanket keeping off the cold.

The old drake from some remote fastness flung his protest to the four winds!

"He's a new one." Peggy patted the dog, who rose to welcome them. "He ought to be in the kennels. Somebody didn't know."

Somebody probably had not known, but had learned. For now the door opened, and a young man came in. He was a big young man with fair hair, and he had arrived on the train.

"I beg your pardon," he said, as he saw them, "but they told me I had put my dog in the wrong place."

Peggy was important. "He belongs at the kennels. He's in Diogenes' corner."

"Diogenes?"

The old drake, reassured by the sound of voices, showed himself for a moment in the track of the lantern light.

"There he is," Peggy said, excitedly; "he lives in here by himself."

Anne had not spoken, but as she lifted the lantern from its nail and held it high, Richard Brooks was aware that this was the same girl whom he had glimpsed from the train. He had noted then her slenderness of outline, the grace and freedom of her pose; at closer range he saw her delicate smallness; the bloom on her cheek; the dusky softness of her hair; the length of her lashes; the sapphire deeps of her eyes. Yet it was not these charms which arrested his attention; it was, rather, a certain swift thought of her as superior to her surroundings.

"Then it is Diogenes whose pardon I must beg," he said, his eyes twinkling as the old drake took refuge behind Anne's skirts. "Toby, come out of that. It's you for a cold kennel."

"It's not cold in the kennels," Peggy protested; "it is nice and warm, and the food is fixed by Eric Brand."

"And where can I find Eric Brand?"

"He isn't here." It was Anne who answered him. "He is away for the New Year. Peggy and I have been looking after the dogs."

She did not tell him that she had done it because she liked dogs, and not because it was a part of her day's work. And he did not know that she taught school. Hence, as he walked beside her toward the kennels, with Peggy dancing on ahead with Toby, and with Diogenes left behind in full possession, he thought of her, quite naturally, as the daughter of Peter Bower.

It was an uproarious pack which greeted them. Every Old Gentleman owned a dog, and there was Peter's Mamie, two or three eager-eyed pointers, setters, hounds and Chesapeake Bay dogs. Old Mamie was nondescript, and was shut up in the kennels to-night only because Eric was away. She was eminently trustworthy, and usually ran at large.

Toby, given a box to himself, turned his melting eyes upon his master and whined.

"He was sent to me just before I left New York," Richard explained. "I fancy he is rather homesick. I am the only thing in sight that he knows."

"You might take him into the house," Anne said doubtfully, "only it is a rule that if there are many dogs they all have to share alike and stay out here. When there are only two or three they go into the sitting-room with the men."

"He can lie down behind the stove in the kitchen," Peggy offered hospitably. "Mamie does."

Richard shook his head. "Toby will have to learn with the rest of us that life isn't always what we want it to be."

He was startled by the look which the girl with the lantern gave him. "Why shouldn't it be as we want it?" she said, with sudden fire; "if I were Providence, I'd make things pleasant, and you are playing Providence to Toby. Why not let him have the comfort of the kitchen stove?"

CHAPTER II

In Which a Princess Serving Finds That the Motto of Kings is Meaningless.

TOBY, safe and snug behind the kitchen stove, was keenly alive to the fact that supper was being served. He had had his own supper, so that his interest was purely impersonal.

Mrs. Bower cooked, and her daughter Beulah waited on the table. The service was not elaborate. Everything went in at once, and Peter helped the women carry the loaded trays.

Anne Warfield ate usually with the family. She would have liked to sit with the Old Gentlemen at their genial gatherings, but it would not, she felt, have been sanctioned by the Bowers. Their own daughter, Beulah, would not have done it. Beulah had nothing in common with the jovial hunters and fishers. She had her own circle of companions, her own small concerns, her own convictions as to the frivolity of these elderly guests. She would not have cared to listen to what they had to say. She did not know that their travels, their adventures, their stored-up experience had made them rich in anecdote, ready of tongue to tell of wonders un-

dreamed of in the dullness of her own monotonous days.

But Anne Warfield knew. Now and then from the threshold she had caught the drift of their discourse, and she had yearned to draw closer, to sail with them on unknown seas of romance and of reminiscence, to leave behind her for the moment the atmosphere of schoolhouse, of small gossip, of trivial circumstance.

It was with this feeling strong upon her that tonight, when the supper bell rang, she came into the kitchen and asked Mrs. Bower if she might help Beulah. She had no feeling that such labor was beneath her. If a princess cared to serve, she was none the less a princess!

Secure, therefore, in her sense of unassailable dignity, she entered the dining-room. She might have been a goddess chained to menial tasks—a small and vivid goddess, with dusky hair. Richard Brooks, observing her, had once more a swift and certain sense of her fineness and of her unlikeness to those about her.

The young man with the black ribbon on his eyeglass also observed her. Later he said to Mrs. Bower, "Can you give me a room here for a month?"

"I might. Usually people don't care to stay so long at this time of year."

"I am writing a book. I want to stay."

Beside Richard Brooks at the table sat Evelyn Chesley. With the Dutton-Ames, and Philip Meade, she had come down with Richard and his mother to speed them upon their mad adventure.

Evelyn had taken off her hat. Her wonderful hair was swept up in a new fashion from her forehead, a dull gold comb against its native gold. She wore a silken blouse of white, slightly open at the neck. On her fingers diamonds sparkled. It seemed to Anne, serving, as if the air of the long low room were charged with some thrilling quality. Here were youth and beauty, wit and light laughter, the perfume of the roses which Evelyn wore tucked in her belt. There was the color, too, of the roses, and of the cloak in which Winifred Ames had wrapped her shivering fairness. The cloak was blue, a marvelous pure shade like the Madonna blue of some old picture.

Even Richard's mother seemed illumined by the radiance which enveloped the rest. She was a slender little thing and wore plain and simple widow's black. Yet her delicate cheeks were flushed, her eyes were shining, and her son had made her, too, wear a red rose.

The supper was suited to the tastes of the old epicures for whom it had been planned. There were oysters and ducks with the juices following the knife, hot breads, wild grape jelly, hominy and celery.

The fattest Old Gentleman carved the ducks. The people who had come on the train were evidently his friends. Indeed, he called the little lady with the shining eyes "Cousin Nancy."

"So you've brought your boy back?" he said, smiling down at her.

"Oh, yes, yes. Cousin Brin, I feel as if I had reached the promised land."

"You'll find things changed. Nothing as it was in your father's time. Foreigners to the right of you, foreigners to the left. Italians, Greeks—barbarians—cutting the old place into little farms—blotting out the old landmarks."

"I don't care; the house still stands, and Richard will hang out my father's sign, and when people want a doctor, they will come again to Crossroads."

"People in these days go to town for their doctors."

Richard's head went up. "I'll make them come to me, sir. And you mustn't think that mother brought me back. I came because I wanted to come. I hate New York."

The listening Old Gentlemen, whose allegiance was given to a staid and stately town on the Patapsco, quite glowed at that, but Evelyn flamed:

"You might have made a million in New York, Richard."

"I don't want a million."

"Oh," she appealed to Brinsley Tyson, "what can

you do with a man like that—without red blood—without ambition?"

And now it was Richard who flamed. "I am ambitious enough, Eve, but it isn't to make money."

"He has some idea," the girl proclaimed recklessly to the whole table, "of living as his ancestors lived; as if one *could*. He believes that people should go back to plain manners and to strict morals. His mission is to keep this mad world sane."

A ripple of laughter greeted her scorn. Her own laughter met it. The slim young man at the other end of the table swung his eye-glasses from their black ribbon negligently, but his eyes missed nothing.

"It is my only grievance against you, Mrs. Nancy," Eve told the little shining lady. "I love you for everything else, but not for this."

"I am sorry, my dear. But Richard and I think alike. So we are going to settle at Crossroads—and live happy ever after."

Anne Warfield, outwardly calm, felt the blood racing in her veins. The old house at Crossroads was just across the way from her little school. She had walked in the garden every day, and now and then she had taken the children there. They had watched the squirrels getting ready for the winter, and had fed the belated birds with crumbs from the little lunch baskets. And there had been the old

sun-dial to mark the hour when the recess ended, and to warn them that work must begin.

She had a rapturous vision of what it might be to have the old house open, and to see Nancy Brooks and her son Richard coming in and out.

Later, however, alone in her dull room, stripped of its holiday trappings, the vision faded. To Nancy and Richard she would be just the school-teacher across the way, as to-night she had been the girl who waited on the table!

There was music down-stairs. The whine of the phonograph came up to her.

Peggy, knocking, brought an interesting bulletin.

"They are dancing," she said. "Let's sit on the stairs and look."

From the top of the stairs they could see straight into the long front room. The hall was dimly lighted so that they were themselves free from observation. Philip Meade and Eve were dancing, and the Dutton-Ames. Eve had on very high shoes with very high heels. Her skirt was wide and flaring. She dipped and swayed and floated, and the grace of the man with whom she danced matched her own.

"Isn't it lovely," said Peggy's little voice, "isn't it lovely, Anne?"

It was lovely, lovely as a dream. It was a sort of ecstasy of motion. It was youth and joy incarnate. Anne had a wild moment of rebellion. Why must she sit always at the head of the stairs?

The music stopped. Eve and Philip became one of the circle around the fireplace in the front room. Again Eve's roses and Winifred's cloak gave color to the group. There was also the leaping golden flame of the fire, and, in the background, a slight blue haze where some of the Old Gentlemen smoked.

The young man with the eye-glasses was telling a story. He told it well, and there was much laughter when he finished. When the music began again, he danced with Winifred Ames. Dutton Ames watched them, smiling. He always smiled when his eyes rested on his lovely wife.

Evelyn danced with Richard. He did not dance as well as Philip, but he gave the effect of doing it easily. He swung her finally out into the hall. The whine of the phonograph ceased. Richard and Eve sat down on a lower step of the stairway.

The girl's voice came up to the quiet watchers clearly. "When are you coming to New York to dance with me again, Dicky Boy?"

"You must come down here. Pip will bring you in his car for the week-ends, with the Dutton-Ames. And I'll get a music box and a lot of new records. The old dining-room has a wonderful floor."

"I hate your wonderful floor and your horrid old house. And when I think of Fifth Avenue and the lights and the theaters and you away from it all——"

"Poor young doctors have no right to the lights

and all the rest of it. Eve, don't let's quarrel at the last moment. You'll be reconciled to it all some day."

"I shall never be reconciled."

And now Philip Meade was claiming her. "You promised me this, Eve."

"I shall have all the rest of the winter for you, Pip."

"As if that made any difference! I never put off till to-morrow the things I want to do to-day. And as for Richard, he'll come running back to us before the winter is over."

Richard shrugged. "You're a pair of cheerful prophets. Go and fox-trot with him, Eve."

Left alone, the eyes of the young doctor went at once to the top of the stairs.

"Come down and dance," he said.

"Do you mean me?" Peggy demanded out of the dimness.

"I mean both of you."

"I can't dance—not the new dances." Anne was conscious of an overwhelming shyness. "Take Peggy."

"How did you know we were up here?" Peggy asked.

"Well, I heard a little laugh, and a little whisper, and I looked up and saw a little girl."

"Oh, oh, did you really?"

"Really."

"Well, I can't dance. But I can try."

So they tried, with Richard lifting the child lightly to the lilting tune.

When he brought her back, he sat down beside Anne. Shyness still chained her, but he chatted easily. Anne could not have told why she was shy. In the stable she had felt at her ease with him. But then she had not seen Eve or Winifred. It was the women who had seemed to make the difference.

Presently, however, he had her telling of her school. "It begins again to-morrow."

"Do you like it?"

"Teaching? No. But I love the children."

"Do you teach Peggy?"

"Yes. She is too young, really, but she insists upon going."

"There used to be a schoolhouse across the road from my grandfather's. A red brick school with a bell on top."

"There is still a bell. I always ring it myself, although the boys beg to do it. But I like to think of myself as the bell ringer."

It was while they sat there that Eric Brand came in through the kitchen-way to the hall. He stood for a moment looking into the lighted front room where Eve still danced with Philip Meade, and where the young man with the eye-glasses talked with the Dutton-Ames. Anne instinctively kept silent. It was Peggy who revealed their hiding place to him.

"Oh, Eric," she piped, "are you back?" She went flying down the stairs to him.

He caught her, and holding her in his arms, peered up. "Who's there?"

Peggy answered. "It's Anne and the new doctor. I danced with him, and he came on the train with those other people in there—and he has a dog named Toby—it's in the kitchen."

"So that's his dog? It will have to go to the kennels for the night."

Richard, descending, apologized. "I shouldn't have let Toby stay in the house, but Miss Bower put in a plea for him."

"Beulah?"

"He means Anne," Peggy explained. "Her name is Warfield. It's funny you didn't know."

"How could I?" Richard had a feeling that he owed the little goddess-girl an explanation of his stupidity. He found himself again ascending the stairs.

But Anne had fled. Overwhelmingly she realized that Richard had believed her to be the daughter of Peter Bower. Daughter of that crude and common man! Sister of Beulah! Friend of Eric Brand!

Well, she had brought it on herself. She had looked after the dogs and she had waited on the table. People thought differently of these things. The ideals she had tried to teach her children were

not the ideals of the larger world. Labor did not dignify itself. The motto of kings was meaningless! A princess serving was no longer a princess!

Sitting very tense and still in the little rocking-chair in her own room, she decided that of course Richard looked down on her. He had perceived in her no common ground of birth or of breeding. Yet her grandfather had been the friend of the grandfather of Richard Brooks!

When Peggy came up, she announced that she was to sleep with Anne. It was an arrangement often made when the house was full. To-night Anne welcomed the cheery presence of the child. She sang her to sleep, and then sat for a long time by the little round stove with Peggy in her arms.

She laid her down as a knock sounded on her door.

"Are you up?" some one asked, and she opened it, to find Evelyn Chesley.

"May I borrow a needle?" She showed a torn length of lace-trimmed flounce. "I caught it on a rocker in my room. There shouldn't be any rocker."

"Mrs. Bower loves them," Anne said, as she hunted through her little basket; "she loves to rock and rock. All the women around here do."

"Then you're not one of them?"

"No. My grandmother was Cynthia Warfield of Carroll."

The name meant nothing to Evelyn. It would have meant much to Nancy Brooks.

"How did you happen to come here? I don't see how any one could choose to come."

"My mother died—and there was no one but my Great-uncle Rodman Warfield. I had to get something to do—so I came here, and Uncle Rod went to live with a married cousin."

Evelyn had perched herself on the post of Anne's bed and was mending the flounce. Although she was not near the lamp, she gave an effect of gathering to her all the light of the room. She was wrapped in a robe of rose-color, a strange garment with fur to set it off, and of enormous fullness. It spread about her and billowed out until it almost hid the little bed and the child upon it.

Beside her, Anne in her blue serge felt clumsy and common She knew that she ought not to feel that way, but she did. She would have told her scholars that it was not clothes that made the man, or dress the woman. But then she told her scholars many things that were right and good. She tried herself to be as right and good as her theories. But it was not always possible. It was not possible at this moment.

"What brought you here?" Eve persisted.

"I teach school. I came in September."

"What do you teach?"

"Everything. We are not graded."

"I hope you teach them to be honest with themselves."

"I am not sure that I know what you mean?"

"Don't let them pretend to be something that they are not. That's why so many people fail. They reach too high, and fall. That's what Nancy Brooks is doing to Richard. She is making him reach too high."

She laughed as she bent above her needle. "I fancy you are not interested in that. But I can't think of anything but—the waste of it. I hope you will all be so healthy that you won't need him, and then he will have to come back to New York."

"I don't see how anybody could leave New York. Not to come down here." Anne drew a quick breath.

Eve spoke carelessly: "Oh, well, I suppose it isn't so bad here for a woman, but for a man—a man needs big spaces. Richard will be cramped—he'll shrink to the measure of all this—narrowness." She had finished her flounce, and she rose and gave Anne the needle. "In the morning, if the weather is good, we are to ride to Crossroads. Is your school very far away?"

"It is opposite Crossroads. Mrs. Brooks' father built it."

Anne spoke stiffly. She had felt the sting of Eve's indifference, and she was furious with herself for her consciousness of Eve's clothes, of her rings—of the gold comb in her hair.

When her visitor had gone, Anne took down her own hair, and flung it up into a soft knot on the top of her head. Swept back thus, her face seemed to bloom into sudden beauty. She slipped the blue dress from her shoulders and saw the long slim line of her neck and the whiteness of her skin.

The fire had died down in the little round stove. The room was cold. She thought of Eve's rose-color, and of the warmth of her furs.

Bravely, however, she hummed the tune to which the others had danced. She lifted her feet in time. Her shoes were heavy, and she took them off. She tried to get the rhythm, the lightness, the grace of movement. But these things must be taught, and she had no one to teach her.

When at last she crept into bed beside the sleeping Peggy, she was chilled to the bone, and she was crying.

Peggy stirred and murmured.

Soothing the child, Anne told herself fiercely that she was a goose to be upset because Eve Chesley had rings and wore rose-color. Why, she was no better than Diogenes, who had fumed and fussed because Toby had taken his straw in the stable.

But her philosophy failed to bring peace of mind. For a long time she lay awake, working it out. At last she decided, wearily, that she had wept because she really didn't know any of the worth-while things. She didn't know any of the young things and the

gay things. She didn't know how to dance or to talk to men like Richard Brooks. The only things that she knew in the whole wide world were —books!

CHAPTER III

In Which the Crown Prince Enters Upon His Own.

IT developed that the name of the young man with the eye-glasses was Geoffrey Fox. Mrs. Bower told Anne at the breakfast table, as the two women sat alone.

"He is writing a book, and he wants to stay."

"The little dark man?"

"I shouldn't call him little. He is thin, but he is as tall as Richard Brooks."

"Is he?" To Anne it had seemed as if Richard had towered above her like a young giant. She had scarcely noticed the young man with the eye-glasses. He had melted into the background of old gentlemen; had become, as it were, a part of a composite instead of a single personality.

But to be writing a book!

"What kind of a book, Mrs. Bower?"

"I don't know. He didn't say. I am going to give him the front room in the south wing; then he will have a view of the river."

When Anne met the dark young man in the hall an hour later, she discovered that he had keen eyes and a mocking smile.

He stopped her. "Do we have to be introduced? I am going to stay here. Did Mrs. Bower tell you?"

"She told me you were writing a book."

"Don't tell anybody else; I'm not proud of it."

"Why not?"

He shrugged. "My stories are pot-boilers, most of them—with everybody happy in the end."

"Why shouldn't everybody be happy in the end?"

"Because life isn't that way."

"Life is what we make it."

"Who told you that?"

She flushed. "It is what I tell my school children."

"But have you found it so?"

She faltered. "No—but perhaps it is my fault."

"It isn't anybody's fault. If the gods smile—we are happy. If they frown, we are miserable. That's all there is to it."

"I should hate to think that was all." She was roused and ready to fight for her ideals. "I should hate to think it."

"All your hating won't make it as you want it," his glance was quizzical, "but we won't quarrel about it."

"Of course not," stiffly.

"And we are to be friends? You see I am to stay a month."

"Are you going to write about us?"

"I shall write about the Old Gentlemen. Is there always such a crowd of them?"

"Only on holidays and week-ends."

"Perhaps I shall write about you ——" daringly. "I need a little lovely heroine."

Her look stopped him. His face changed. "I beg your pardon," he said quickly. "I should not have said that."

"Would you have said it if I had not waited on the table?" Her voice was tremulous. The color that had flamed in her cheeks still dyed them. "I thought of it last night, after I went up-stairs. I have been trying to teach my little children in my school that there is dignity in service, and so—I have helped Mrs. Bower. But I felt that people did not understand."

"You felt that we—thought less of you?"

"Yes," very low.

"And that I spoke as I did because I did not—respect you?"

"Yes."

"Then I beg your pardon. Indeed, I do beg your pardon. It was thoughtless. Will you believe that it was only because I was thoughtless?"

"Yes." But her troubled eyes did not meet his. "Perhaps I am too sensitive. Perhaps you would have said—the same things—to Eve Chesley—if you had just met her. But I am sure you would not have said it in the same tone."

He held out his hand to her. "You'll forgive me? Yes? And be friends?"

She did not seem to see his hand. "Of course I forgive you," she said, with a girlish dignity which sat well upon her, "and perhaps I have made too much of it, but you see I am so much alone, and I think so much."

He wanted to ask her questions, of why she was there and of why she was alone. But something in her manner forbade, and so they spoke of other things until she left him.

Geoffrey went out later for a walk in the blinding snow. All night it had snowed and the storm had a blizzard quality, with the wind howling and the drifts piling to prodigious heights. Geoffrey faced the elements with a strength which won the respect of Richard Brooks who, also out in it, with his dog Toby, was battling gloriously with wind and weather.

"If we can reach the shelter of the pines," he shouted, "they'll break the force of the storm."

Within the wood the snow was in winding sheets about the great trees.

"What giant ghosts!" Geoffrey said. "Yet in a month or two the sap will run warm in their veins, and the silence will be lapped by waves of sound—the singing of birds and of little streams."

"I used to come here when I was a boy," Richard told him. "There were violets under the bank, and

I picked them and made tight bunches of them and gave them to my mother. She was young then. I remember that she usually wore white dresses, with a blue sash fluttering."

"You lived here then?"

"No, we visited at my grandfather's, a mile or two away. He used to drive us down, and he would sit out there on the point and fish,—a grand old figure, in his broad hat, with his fishing creel over his shoulder. There were just two sports that my grandfather loved, fishing and fox-hunting; but he was a very busy doctor and couldn't ride often to hounds. But he kept a lot of them. He would have had a great contempt for Toby. His own dogs were a wiry little breed."

"My grandfather was blind, and always in his library. So my boyhood was different. I used to read to him. I liked it, and I wouldn't exchange my memories for yours, except the violets—I should like to pick them here in the spring—perhaps I shall —I told Mrs. Bower I would take a room for a month or more—and since we have spoken of violets—I may wait for their blooming."

He laughed, and as they turned back, "I have found several things to keep me," he said, but he did not name them.

All day Anne was aware of the presence in the house of the young guests. She was aware of Winifred Ames' blue cloak and of Eve's roses. She was

aware of Richard's big voice booming through the hall, of Geoffrey's mocking laugh.

But she did not go down among them. She ate her meals after the others had finished. She did not wait upon the table and she did not sit upon the stairs. In the afternoon she wrote a long letter to her Great-uncle Rodman, and she went early to bed.

She was waked in the morning by the bustle of departure. Some of the Old Gentlemen went back by motor, others by train. Warmed by a hearty breakfast, bundled into their big coats, they were lighted on their way by Eric Brand.

It was just as the sun flashed over the horizon and showed the whiteness of a day swept clear by the winds of the night that the train for the north carried off the Dutton-Ames, Philip and Eve.

Evelyn went protesting. "Some day you are going to regret it, Richard."

"Don't croak. Wish me good luck, Eve."

But she would not. Yet when she stood at last on the train steps to say "Good-bye," she had in her hand one of the roses he had given her and which she had worn. She touched it lightly to her lips and tossed it to him.

By the time he had picked it up the train was on its way, and Evelyn, looking back, had her last glimpse of him standing straight and tall against the morning sky, the rose in his hand.

It was eight o'clock when Eric drove Anne and

Peggy through the drifts to the Crossroads school. It was nine when Geoffrey Fox came down to a late breakfast. It was ten when Richard and his mother and the dog Toby in a hired conveyance arrived at the place which had once been Nancy's home.

Imposing, even in its shabbiness, stood the old house, at the end of an avenue of spired cedars.

As they opened the door a grateful warmth met them.

"David has been here," Nancy said. "Oh, Richard, Richard, what a glorious day to begin."

And now there came from among the shadows a sound which made them stop and listen. "Tick, tock," said the great hall clock.

"Mother, who wound it?"

Nancy Brooks laughed tremulously. "Cousin David had the key. In all these years he has never let the old clock run down. It seemed queer to think of it ticking away in this empty house."

There were tears in her eyes. He stooped and kissed her. "And now that you are here, you are going to be happy?"

"Very happy, dear boy."

It was nearly twelve when David Tyson came limping up the path. He had a basket in one hand, and a cane in the other. Behind him trotted a weedy-looking foxhound. The dog Toby, charging out of the door as Nancy opened it, fell, as it were, upon the neck of the hound. His overtures of

friendship were met with a dignified aloofness which merged gradually into a reluctant cordiality.

Nancy held out both hands to the old man. "I saw you coming. Oh, how good it seems to be here again, Cousin David."

"Let me look at you." He set the basket down, and took her hands in his. Then he shook his head. "New York has done things to you," he said. "It has given you a few gray hairs. But now that you are back again I shall try to forgive it."

"I shall never forgive it," she said, "for what it has done to me and mine."

"But you are here, and you have brought your boy; that's a thing to be thankful for, Nancy."

They were silent in the face of overwhelming memories. The only sound in the shadowy hall was the ticking of the old clock—the old clock which had tick-tocked in all the years of loneliness with no one to listen.

Richard greeted him with heartiness. "This looks pretty good to me, Cousin David."

"It's God's country, Richard. Brin hates it. He loves his club and the city streets. But for me there's nothing worth while but this sweep of the hills and the river between."

He uncovered his basket. "Tom put up some things for you. I've engaged Milly, a mulatto girl, but she can't get here until to-morrow. She is

about the best there is left. Most of them go to town. She'll probably seem pretty crude after New York servants, Nancy."

"I don't care." Nancy almost sang the words. "I don't care what I have to put up with, Cousin David. I shall sleep to-night under my own roof with nothing between me and the stars. And there won't be anybody overhead or underneath, and there won't be a pianola to the right of me, and a phonograph to the left, and there won't be the rumble of the subway or the crash of the elevated, and in the morning I shall open my eyes and see the sun rise over the river, and I shall look out upon the world that I love and have loved all of these years ——"

And now she was crying, and Richard had her in his arms. Over her head he looked at the older man. "I didn't dream that she felt like this."

"I knew—as soon as I saw her. You must never take her back, Richard."

"Of course not," hotly.

Yet with the perverseness of youth he was aware, as he said it, of a sudden sense of revolt against the prospect of a future spent in this quiet place. Flashing came a vision of the city he had left, of crowded hospitals, of big men consulting with big men, of old men imparting their secrets of healing to the young; of limousines speeding luxuriously on errands of mercy; of patients pouring out their wealth to the men who had made them well.

All this he had given up because his mother had asked it. She had spoken of the place which his grandfather had filled, of the dignity of a country practice, of the opportunities for research and for experiment. At close range, the big town set between its rivers and the sea had seemed noisy and vulgar. Its people had seemed mad in their race for money. Its medical men had seemed to lack the fineness and finish which come to those who move and meditate in quiet places.

But seen from afar as he saw it now, it seemed a wonder city, its tall buildings outlined like gigantic castles against the sky. It seemed filled to the brim with vivid life. It seemed, indeed, to call him back!

While David and Nancy talked he went out, and, from the top of the snowy steps, surveyed his domain. Back and back in the wide stretch of country which faced him, beyond the valleys, on the other side of the hills, were people who would some day listen for the step of young Richard as those who had gone before had listened for the step of his grandfather. He saw himself going forth on stormy nights to fight pain and pestilence; to minister to little children, to patient mothers; to men beaten down by an enemy before whom their strength was as wax. They would wait for him, anxious for his verdict, yet fearing it, welcoming him as a saviour, who would stand with flaming sword between disease and the Dark Angel.

The schoolhouse was on the other side of the road. It was built of brick like the house. Richard's grandfather had paid for the brick. He had believed in public schools and had made this one possible. Children came to it from all the countryside. There were other schools in the sleepy town. This was the Crossroads school, as Richard Tyson had been the Crossroads doctor. He had given himself to a rural community—his journeys had been long and his life hard, but he had loved the labor.

The bell rang for the noon recess. The children appeared presently, trudging homeward through the snow to their midday dinners. Then Anne Warfield came out. She wore a heavy brown coat and soft brown hat. In her hand was a small earthen dish. She strewed seeds for the birds, and they flew down in front of her—juncoes and sparrows, a tufted titmouse, a cardinal blood-red against the whiteness. She was like a bird herself in all her brown.

When the dish was empty, she turned it upside down, and spread her hands to show that there was nothing more. On the Saturday night when she had waited on the table, Richard had noticed the loveliness of her hands. They were small and white, and without rings. Yet in spite of their smallness and whiteness, he knew that they were useful hands, for she had served well at Bower's. And now he knew that they were kindly hands, for she had fed the birds who had come begging to her door.

Peggy joined her, and the two came out the gate together. Anne looking across saw Richard. She hesitated, then crossed the road.

He at once went to meet her. She flushed a little as she spoke to him. "Peggy and I want to ask a favor. We've always had our little Twelfth Night play in the Crossroads stable. And we had planned for it this year—you see, we didn't know that you were coming."

"And we were afraid that you wouldn't want us," Peggy told him.

"Were you really afraid?"

"I wasn't. But Miss Anne was."

"I told the children that they mustn't be disappointed if we were not able to do this year as we had done before. I felt that with people in the house, it might not be pleasant for them to have us coming in such a crowd."

"It will be pleasant, and mother will be much interested. I wish you'd come up and tell us about it."

She shook her head. "Peggy and I have just time to get back to Bower's for our dinner."

"Aren't the roads bad?"

"Not when the snow is hard."

Peggy went reluctantly. "I think he is perfectly lovely," she said, at a safe distance. "Don't you?"

Anne's reply was guarded. "He is very kind. I am glad that he doesn't mind about the Twelfth Night play, Peggy."

Richard spoke to David of Anne as the two men, a few minutes later, climbed the hill toward David's house.

"She seems unusual."

"She is the best teacher we have ever had, but she ought not to be at Bower's. She isn't their kind."

David's little house, set on top of a hill, was small and shabby without, but within it was as compact as a ship's cabin. David's old servant, Tom, kept it immaculate, and there were books everywhere, old portraits, precious bits of mahogany.

From the window beside the fireplace there was a view of the river. It was a blue river to-day, sparkling in the sunshine. David, standing beside Richard, spoke of it.

"It isn't always blue, but it is always beautiful. Even when the snow flies as it did yesterday."

"And are you content with this, Cousin David?"

The answer was evasive. "I have my little law practice, and my books. And is any one ever content, Richard?"

Going down the hill, Richard pondered. Was Eve right after all? Did a man who turned his face away from the rush of cities really lack red blood?

Stopping at the schoolhouse, he found teacher and scholars still gone. But the door was unlocked and he went in. The low-ceiled room was charming, and the good taste of the teacher was evident in

its decorations. There were branches of pine and cedar on the walls, a picture of Washington at one end with a flag draped over it, a pot of primroses in the south window.

There were several books on Anne's desk. Somewhat curiously he examined the titles. A shabby Browning, a modern poet or two, Chesterton, a volume of Pepys, the pile topped by a small black Bible. Moved by a sudden impulse, he opened the Bible. The leaves fell back at a marked passage:

"*Let not your heart be troubled.*"

He shut the book sharply. It was as if he had peered into the girl's soul. The red was in his cheeks as he turned away.

That night Nancy Brooks went with Richard to his room. On the threshold she stopped.

"I have given this room to you," she said, "because it was mine when I was a girl, and all my dreams have been shut in—waiting for you."

"Mother," he caught her hands in his, "you mustn't dream too much for me."

"Let me dream to-night;" she was looking up at him with her shining eyes; "to-morrow I shall be just a commonplace mother of a commonplace son; but to-night I am queen, and you are the crown prince on the eve of coronation. Oh, Hickory Dickory, I am such a happy mother."

Hickory Dickory! It was her child-name for him.

She had not often used it of late. He felt that she would not often use it again. He was much moved by her dedication of him to his new life. He held her close. His doubts fled. He thought no more of Eve and of her flaming arguments. Somewhere out in the snow her rose lay frozen and faded where he had dropped it.

And when he slept and dreamed it was of a little brown bird which sang in the snow, and the song that it sang seemed to leap from the pages of a Book, "*Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*"

CHAPTER IV

In Which Three Kings Come to Crossroads.

ANNE'S budget of news to her Great-uncle Rod swelled to unusual proportions in the week following the opening of Crossroads. She had so much to say to him, and there was no one else to whom she could speak with such freedom and frankness.

By the Round Stove.

MY DEAR:

I am sending this as an antidote for my doleful Sunday screed. Now that the Lovely Ladies are gone, I am myself again!

I know that you are saying, "You should never have been anything but yourself." That's all very well for you who know Me-Myself, but these people know only the Outside-Person part of me, and the Outside-Person part is stiff and old-fashioned, and self-conscious. You see it has been so many months since I have hobnobbed with Lilies-of-the-Field and with Solomons-in-all-their-Glory. And even when I did hobnob with them it was for such a little time, and it ended so heart-breakingly. But I am not

going to talk of that, or I shall weep and wail again, and that wouldn't be fair to you.

The last Old Gentleman left yesterday in the wake of the Lovely Ladies. Did I tell you that Brinsley Tyson is a cousin of Mrs. Brooks? His twin brother, David, lives up the road. Brinsley is the city mouse and David is the country one. They are as different as you can possibly imagine. Brinsley is fat and round and red, and David is thin and tall and pale. Yet there is the "twin look" in their faces. The high noses and square chins. Neither of them wears a beard. None of the Old Gentlemen does. Why is it? Is hoary-headed age a thing of the dark and distant past? Are you the only one left whose silver banner blows in the breeze? Are the grandfathers all trying to look like boys to match the grandmothers who try to look like girls?

Mrs. Brooks won't be that kind of grandmother. She is gentle and serene, and the years will touch her softly. I shall like her if she will let me. But perhaps little school-teachers won't come within her line of vision. You see I learned my lesson in those short months when I peeped into Paradise.

I wonder how it would seem to be a Lily-of-the-Field. I've never been one, have I? Even when I was a little girl I used to stand on a chair to wipe the dishes while you washed them. I felt very important to be helping mother, and you would talk about the dignity of labor—*you darling*, with the hot

water wrinkling and reddening your lovely long fingers, which were made to paint masterpieces.

I am trying to pass on to my school children what you have given to me, and oh, Uncle Rod, when I speak to them I seem to be looking with you, straight through the kitchen window, at the sunset. We never knew that the kitchen sink was there, did we? We saw only the sunsets. And now because you are a darling dear, and because you are always seeing sunsets, I am sending you a verse or two which I have copied from a book which Geoffrey Fox left last night at my door.

" When Salomon sailed from Ophir,
With Olliphants and gold,
The kings went up, the kings went down,
Trying to match King Salomon's crown;
But Salomon sacked the sunset,
Wherever his black ships rolled.
He rolled it up like a crimson cloth,
And crammed it into his hold.

CHORUS: " Salomon sacked the sunset,
Salomon sacked the sunset,
He rolled it up like a crimson cloth,
And crammed it into his hold.

" His masts were Lebanon cedars,
His sheets were singing blue,
But that was never the reason why
He stuffed his hold with the sunset sky!
The kings could cut their cedars,
And sail from Ophir, too;
But Salomon packed his heart with dreams,
And all the dreams were true."

Now join in the chorus, you old dear—and I'll think that I am a little girl again —

> " The kings could cut their cedars,
> Cut their Lebanon cedars;
> But Salomon packed his heart with dreams,
> *And all*
> *the dreams*
> *were true!*"

In the Schoolroom.

I told you that Geoffrey Fox left a book for me to read. I told you that he wore eye-glasses on a black ribbon, that he is writing a novel, and that I don't like him. Well, he went into Baltimore this morning to get his belongings, and when he comes back he will stay until his book is finished. It will be interesting to be under the same roof with a story. All the shadows and corners will seem full of it. The house will speak to him, and the people in it, though none of the rest of us will hear the voices, and the wind will speak and the leaping flames in the fireplace, and the sun and the moon—and when the snow comes it will whisper secrets in his ear and presently it will be snowing all through the pages.

It snowed this morning, and from my desk I can see young Dr. Brooks shoveling a path from his front porch. He and his mother came to Crossroads yesterday, and they have been very busy getting settled. They have a colored maid, Milly, but no

man, and young Richard does all of the outside work. I think I shall like him. Don't you remember how as a little girl I always adored the Lion-hearted king? I always think of him when I see Dr. Brooks. He isn't handsome, but he is broad-shouldered and big and blond. I haven't had but one chance to speak to him since he and his mother left Bower's. Perhaps I shan't have many chances to speak to him. But a cat may look at a king!

I am all alone in the schoolroom. The children went an hour ago. Eric and Beulah are to call for me on their way home from town. They took Peggy with them. Did I tell you that Eric is falling in love with Beulah? I am not sure whether it is the best thing for him, but I am sure it is for her. She is very happy, and blushes when he looks at her. He is finer than she, and bigger, mentally and spiritually. He is crude, but he will grow as so many American men do grow—and there are dreams in his clear blue eyes. And, after all, it is the dreams that count—as Salomon discovered.

Yet it may be that Eric will bring Beulah up to his level. She is an honest little thing and good and loving. Her life is narrow, and she thinks narrow thoughts. But he is wise and kind, and already I can see that she is trying to keep step with him—which is as it should be.

I like to think that father and mother kept step through all the years. She was his equal, his com-

rade; she marched by his side with her head up, fitting her two short steps to his long stride.

King Richard has just waved to me. I stood up to see the sunset—a band of gold with black above, and he waved, and started to run across the road. Then somebody called him from the house. Perhaps it was the telephone and his first patient. If I am ever ill, I should like to have a Lion-hearted Doctor—wouldn't you?

At the Sign of the Lantern.

I am with Diogenes in the stable, with the lantern making deep shadows, and the loft steps for a desk. Eric and Beulah came for me before I had asked a question—an important question—so I am finishing my letter here, while Eric puts Daisy in her stall, and then he will post it for me.

Diogenes has had his corn, and is as happy as Brinsley Tyson after a good dinner. Oh, such eating and drinking! How these old men love it! And you with your bread and milk and your book propped up against the lamp, or your handful of raisins and your book under a tree!

But I must scribble fast and ask my question. It isn't easy to ask. So I'll put it in sections:

Do you
ever
see
Jimmie—Ford?

That is the first time that I have written his name since I came here. I had made up my mind that I wouldn't write it. But somehow the rose-colored atmosphere of the other night, and these men of his kind have brought it back—all those whirling weeks when you warned me and I wouldn't listen. Uncle Rod, if a woman hadn't an ounce of pride she might meet such things. If I had not had a grandmother as good as Jimmie's and better—I might have felt less—stricken. Geoffrey Fox spoke to me on Saturday in a way which—hurt. Perhaps I am too sensitive—but I haven't quite learned to—hold up my head.

You mustn't think that I am unhappy. Indeed, I am not, except that I cannot be with you. But it is good to know that you are comfortable, and that Cousin Margaret is making it seem like home. Some day we are to have a home, you and I, when our ship comes in "with the sunset packed in the hold." But now it is well that I have work to do. I know that this is my opportunity, and that I must make the most of it. There's that proverb of yours, "The Lord sends us quail, but he doesn't send them roasted." I have written it out, and have tucked it into my mirror frame. I shall have to roast my own quail. I only hope that I may prove a competent cook!

Eric is here, and I must say "Good-bye." Diogenes sends love, and a little feather that dropped

from his wing. Some day he will send a big one for you to make a pen and write letters to me. I love your letters, and I love you. And oh, you know that you have all the heart's best of your own

ANNE.

The Morning After the Magi Came.

I am up early to tell you about it. But I must go back a little because I have had so much else to talk about that I haven't spoken of the Twelfth Night play.

It seems that years ago, when old Dr. Brooks first built the schoolhouse, the children used his stable on Twelfth Night for a spectacle representing the coming of the Wise Men.

Mr. David had told me of it, and I had planned to revive the old custom this year, and had rehearsed the children. I thought when I heard that the house was to be occupied that I might have to give it up. But Peggy and I plucked up our courage and asked King Richard, and he graciously gave permission.

It was a heavenly night. Snow on the ground and all the stars out. The children met in the schoolhouse and we started in a procession. They all wore simple little costumes, just some bit of bright color draped to give them a quaint picturesqueness. One of the boys led a cow, and there was an old ewe. Then riding on a donkey, bor-

rowed by Mr. David, came the oldest Mary in our school. I chose her because I wanted her to understand the sacred significance of her name, and our only little Joseph walked by her side. The children followed and their parents, with the wise men quite in the rear, so that they might enter after the others.

When we reached the stable, I grouped Joseph and Mary in one of the old mangers, where the Babe lay, and he was a dear, real, baby brother of Mary. I hid a light behind the straw, so that the place was illumined. And then my little wise men came in; and the children, who with their parents were seated on the hay back in the shadows, sang, "We Three Kings" and other carols. The gifts which the Magi brought were the children's own pennies which they are giving to the other little children across the sea who are fatherless because of the war.

It was quite wonderful to hear their sweet little voices, and to see their rapt faces and to know that, however sordid their lives might be, here was Dream, founded on the Greatest Truth, which would lift them above the sordidness.

Dr. Brooks and his mother and Mr. David were not far from me, and Dr. Brooks leaned over and asked if he might speak to the children. I said I should be glad, so he stood up and told them in such simple, fine fashion that he wanted to be to them all that his grandfather had been to their par-

ents and grandparents. He wanted them to feel that his life and service belonged to them. He wanted them to know how pleased he was with the Twelfth Night spectacle, and that he wanted it to become an annual custom.

Then in his mother's name, he asked them to come up to the house—all of them—and we were shown into the Garden Room which opens out upon what was once a terraced garden, and there was a great cake with candles, and sandwiches, and coffee for the grown-ups and hot chocolate for the kiddies.

Wasn't that dear? I had little Francois thank them, and he did it so well. Why is it that these small foreigners lack the self-consciousness of our own boys and girls? He had been one of the wise men in the spectacle, and he still wore his white beard and turban and his long blue and red robes. Yet he wasn't in the least fussed; he simply made a bow, said what he had to say, made another bow, with never a blush or a quaver or giggle. His mother was there, and she was so happy—she is a widow, and sews in the neighborhood, plain sewing, and they are very poor.

I rode home with the Bowers, and as we drove along, I heard the children singing. I am sure they will never forget the night under the winter stars, nor the scene in the stable with the cow and the little donkey and the old ewe, and the Light that il-

lumined the manger. I want them always to remember, Uncle Rod, and I want to remember. It is only when I forget that I lose faith and hope.

Blessed dear, good-night.

YOUR ANNE.

CHAPTER V

In Which Peggy Takes the Center of the Stage.

THE bell on the schoolhouse had a challenging note. It seemed to call to the distant hills, and the echo came back in answer. It was the voice of civilization. "I am here that you may learn of other hills and of other valleys, of men who have dreamed and of men who have discovered, of nations which have conquered and of nations which have fallen into decay. I am here that you may learn—*ding dong*—that you may learn, *ding ding*—that you may learn—*ding dong ding*—of Life."

As she rang the bell, Anne had always a feeling of exhilaration. Its message was clear to her. She hoped it would be clear to others. She tried at least to make it clear to her children.

And now they came streaming over the countryside, big boys with their little sisters beside them, big girls with their little brothers. Some on sleds and some sliding. All rosy-cheeked with the coldness of the morning.

As they filed in, Anne stood behind her desk. They had opening exercises, and then the work of the day began.

It began scrappily. Nobody had their minds upon it. The children were much excited over the events of the preceding night—over the play and the feast which had followed.

Anne, too, was excited. On the way to school she had met Richard, and he had joined her and had told her of his first patient.

"I had to walk at one o'clock in the morning. I must get a horse or a car. I am not quite sure that I ought to afford a car. And I like the idea of a horse. My grandfather rode a horse."

"Are you going to do all the things that your grandfather did?"

He was aware of her quick smile. He smiled back.

"Perhaps. I might do worse. He made great cures with his calomel and his catnip tea."

"Did you cure your patient with catnip tea?"

"Last night? No. It was a child. Measles. I told the rest of the family to stay away from school."

"It is probably too late. They will all have them."

"Have you?"

"No. I am never sick."

Her good health seemed to him another goddess attribute. Goddesses were never ill. They lived eternally with lovely smiles.

He felt this morning that the world was his. He had been called up the night before by a man in whose household there had been a tradition of the

skill of Richard's grandfather. There had been the memory, too, in the minds of the older ones of the days when that other doctor had thundered up the road to succor and to save. It was a proud moment in their lives when they gave to Richard Tyson's grandson his first patient. They felt that Providence in sending sickness upon them had imposed not a penance but a privilege.

Richard had known of their pride and had been touched by it, and with the glow of their gratitude still upon him, he had trudged down the snowy road and had met Anne Warfield!

"You'd better let me come and look over your pupils," he had said to her as they parted; "we don't want an epidemic!"

He was to come at the noon recess. Anne, anticipating his visit, was quite thrillingly emphatic in her history lesson. Not that history had anything to do with measles, but she felt fired by his example to do her best.

She loved to teach history, and she had a lesson not only for her children, but for herself. She was much ashamed of her mood of Sunday. It had been easy enough this morning to talk to Richard; and with Evelyn away, clothes had seemed to sink to their proper significance. And if she had waited on the table she had at least done it well.

Her exposition gained emphasis, therefore, from her state of mind.

"In this beautiful land of ours," she said, "all men are free—and equal. You mustn't think this means that all of you will have the same amount of money or the same kind of clothes, or the same things to eat, or even the same kind of minds. But I think it means that you ought all to have the same kind of consciences. You ought to be equal in right doing. And in love of country. You ought to know when war is righteous, and when peace is righteous. And you can all be equal in this, that no man can make you lie or steal or be a coward."

Thus she inspired them. Thus she saw them thrill as she had herself been thrilled. And that was her reward. For in her school were not only the little Johns and the little Thomases and the little Richards—she found herself quite suddenly understanding why there were so many Richards—there were also the little Ottos and the little Ulrics and the little Wilhelms, and there was François, whose mother went out to sew by the day, and there were Raphael and Alessandro and Simon. Out from the big cities had come the parents of these children, seeking the land, usurping the places of the old American stock, doing what had been left undone in the way of sowing and planting and reaping, making the little gardens yield as they had never yielded, even in those wonder days before the war.

It was Anne Warfield's task to train the children of the newcomers to the American ideal. With the

blood in her of statesmen and of soldiers it was given to her to pass on the tradition of good citizenship. She was, indeed, a torch-bearer, lighting the way to love of country. Yet for a little while she had forgotten it.

She had cried because she could not wear rose-color!

But now her head was high again, and when Richard came she showed him her school, and he shook hands first with the little girls and then with the little boys, and he looked down their throats, and asked them questions, and joked and prodded and took their temperature, and he did it all in such happy fashion that not even the littlest one was afraid.

And when Richard was ready to go, he said to her, "I'll look after their bodies if you'll look after their minds," and as she watched him walk away, she had a tingling sense that they had formed a compact which had to do with things above and beyond the commonplace.

It began to snow in the afternoon, and it was snowing hard when the school day ended. Eric Brand came for Anne and Peggy in the funny little station carriage which was kept at Bower's. Eric and Anne sat on the front seat with Peggy between them. The fat mare, Daisy, jogged placidly along the still white road. There was a top to the carriage, but the snow sifted in, so Anne wrapped Peggy in an old shawl.

"I don't need anything," she said, when Eric offered her a heavier covering. "I love it—like this——"

Eric Brand was big and blond and somewhat slow in his movements. But he had brains and held the position of telegraph operator at Bower's Station. He had, too, a heart of romance. The day before he had seen Evelyn toss the rose to Richard, and he had found it later where Richard had dropped it. He had picked it up, and had put it in water. It had seemed to him that the flower must feel the slight which had been put upon it.

He spoke now to Anne of Richard. "They say he is a good doctor."

"I can't see why he came here."

"His mother wanted him to come. She hates the city. She went there as a bride. Her husband was rich, but he was always speculating. Sometimes they were so poor that she had to do her own work, and sometimes they had a half dozen servants. But they never had a home. And then all at once he lost other people's money as well as his own—and he killed himself——"

She turned on him her startled eyes. "Richard's father?"

"Yes. And after that young Brooks decided that as soon as he finished his medical course he would come here. He thinks that he came because he wanted to come. But he won't stay."

"Why not?"

"You saw his friends. And the women. Some day he'll go back and marry that girl——"

"Evelyn Chesley?"

"Is that her name? She threw him a rose;" he forgot to tell her that he had seen it fade.

They had reached the stable garage. Diogenes welcomed them from his warm corner. The old dog Mamie who had followed the carriage shook the snow from her coat and flopped down on the floor to rest. The little horse Daisy steamed and whinnied. It was a homely scene of sheltered creatures in comfortable quarters. Anne knelt down by the old drake, and he bent his head under her caressing hand. Her face was grave. Eric, watching her, asked: "Has it been a hard day?"

"No;" but she found herself suddenly tired.

She went in with Eric presently. They had a good hot supper, and Anne was hungry. Gathered around the table were Peter and his wife, Beulah and Eric, with Peggy rounding out the half dozen. Geoffrey Fox had gone to town to get his belongings.

Anne had a vision of Richard and his mother in the big house. At their table would be lovely linen and shining silver, and some little formality of service. She felt that she belonged to people like that. She had nothing in common with Peter and his wife and with Eric Brand. Nor with Beulah.

Beulah was planning a little party for the evening.

There was to have been skating, but the warmer weather and the snow had made that impossible.

"I don't know just what I'll do with them," she said; "we might have games."

"Anne knows a lot of things." This from Peggy, who was busy with her bread and milk.

"What things?"

"Oh, dancing——"

Anne flushed. "Peggy!"

"But we do. We make bows like this——" Peggy slid out of her chair and bobbed for them—a most entrancing little curtsey, with all her curls flying.

"And the boys do this." She was quite stiff as she showed them how the little boys bowed.

Anne seemed to feel some need of defense. "Well, they must learn manners."

Peggy, wound up, would not be interrupted. "We dance like this," and away she went in a mad gallop.

Anne laughed. "It warms their blood when the fire won't burn. Peggy, it isn't quite as bad as that. Show them nicely."

So Peggy showed them some pretty steps, and then came back to her bread and milk.

"We might dance." Beulah's mind was on her party. "But some of them don't know how."

Anne offered no suggestions. She really might have helped if she had cared to do it. But she did not care.

When she had finished supper, Eric followed her into the hall. "You'll come down, won't you?"

"I'm not sure."

"Beulah would like it if you would."

"I have a lot of things to do."

"Let them go. You can always work. When you hear the fire roaring up the chimney, you will know that it is calling to you, 'Come down, come down!'"

He stood and watched her as she climbed the stairs. Then he went back and helped Beulah.

Beulah was really very pretty, and to-night her cheeks were pink as she made her little plans with him.

He gave himself pleasantly to her guidance. He moved the furniture for her into the big front room, so that there would be a space for dancing. And presently it became not a sanctum for staid Old Gentlemen, but a gathering place for youth and joy.

Eric made his rounds before the company came. He looked after the dogs in the kennels and at Daisy in her stall. He flashed his lantern into Diogenes' dark corner and saw the old drake at rest.

The snow was whirling in a blinding storm when at last he staggered in with a great log for the fire, and with a basket of cones to make the air sweet. And it was as he knelt to put the cones on the fire that Anne came in and stood beside him.

She had swept up her hair in the new way from

her forehead. She wore white silk stockings and little flat-heeled black slippers, and a flounced white frock. She was not in the least in fashion, but she was quaintly childish and altogether lovely.

The big man looked up at her. "You look nice in that dress."

She smiled down at him. "I'm glad you like it, Eric."

When the young belles and beauties of the country-side came in later, Anne found herself quite eclipsed by their blooming charms. The young men, knowing her as the school-teacher, were afraid of her brains. They talked to her stiffly, and left her as soon as possible for the easier society of girls of their own kind. Peggy sat with Anne on the big settle beside the fire. The child's hand was hot, and she seemed sleepy.

"My eyes hurt," she said, crossly.

"You ought to be in bed, Peggy; shall I take you?"

"No. There's going to be an oyster stew. Daddy said I might sit up."

Beulah in pink and very important came over to them. "Could you show us some of the dances, Anne?"

"Oh, Beulah, can't they play games?"

"I think you might help us." Beulah's tone was slightly petulant.

Anne stood up. "There's a march I taught the children. We could begin with that."

She led the march with Eric. Behind her was the loud laughter of the brawny young men, the loud laughter of the blooming young women. Their merriment sounded a different note from that struck by the genial Old Gentlemen or by the gay group of young folk from New York. What was the difference? Training? Birth?

Anne felt suddenly much alone. She had not belonged to Evelyn Chesley's crowd, she did not belong with Beulah's friends. She wondered if she really belonged anywhere.

Yet as her mind went over and over these things, her little slippered feet led the march. Eric was not awkward, and he fell easily into the step.

"How nicely we do it together," he said, and beamed down on her, and because her heart was really a kind little heart and a womanly one, she smiled up at him and tried to be as fine and friendly as she would have wanted her children to be.

After the dance, the young folks played old-fashioned games—"Going to Jerusalem" and "Post Office." Anne fled to the settle when the last game was announced. Peggy was moping among the cushions.

"Let me take you up to bed, dearie."

"No, I won't. I want to stay here."

The fun was fast and furious. Anne had a little shivery feeling as she watched the girls go out into the hall and come back blushing. How could they

give so lightly what seemed to her so sacred? A woman's lips were for her lover.

She sat very still among the cushions. The fire roared up the chimney. Outside the wind blew; far away in the distance a dog barked.

The barking dog was young Toby. At the heels of his master he was headed straight for the long low house and the grateful shelter of its warmth.

Richard stood for a moment on the porch, looking in through the lighted window. A romping game was in full progress. This time it was "Drop the Handkerchief" and a plump and pretty girl was having a tussle with her captor. Everybody was shouting, clapping. Everybody? On an old settle by the fire sat a slim girl in a white gown. Peggy lay in the curve of her arm, and she was looking down at Peggy.

Richard laughed a big laugh. He could not have told why he laughed, but he flung the door open and stood there radiant.

"May I come in?" he demanded of Beulah, "or will I break up your party?"

"Oh, Dr. Brooks, as if you could. We are so glad to have you."

"I had a sick call, and we are half frozen, Toby and I, and we saw the lights ——"

Now the best place for a half-frozen man is by the fire, and the best place for an anxious and shivering

dog is in a warm chimney corner, so in a moment the young dog Toby was where he could thaw out in a luxurious content, and Richard was on the settle beside Anne, and was saying, "Isn't this great? Do you think I ought to stay? I'm not really invited, you know."

"There's never any formality. Everybody just comes."

"I like your frock," he said suddenly. "You remind me of a little porcelain figure I saw in a Fifth Avenue window not long ago."

"Tell me about it," she said with eagerness.

"About what?"

"New York and the shops. Oh, I saw them once. They were like—Heaven."

She laughed up at him as she said it, and he laughed back.

"You'd get tired of them if you lived there."

"I should never get tired. And if I had money I'd go on in and try on everything. I saw a picture of a gown I'd like—all silver spangles with a pointed train. Do you know I've never worn a train? I should like one—and a big fan with feathers."

He shook his head. "Trains wouldn't suit your style. Nor big fans. You ought to have a little fan—of sandalwood, with a purple and green tassel and smelling sweet. Mother says that her mother carried a fan like that at a White House ball."

"I've never been to a ball."

"Well, you needn't want to go. It's a cram and a jam and everybody bored to death."

"I shouldn't be bored. I should love it."

His eyes were on the fire. And presently he said, "It seems queer to be away from it—New York. There's something about it that gets into your blood. You want it—as you do—drink."

"Then you'll be going back."

He jerked around to look at her. "No," sharply; "what makes you say that?"

"Because—it—it doesn't seem possible that you could be—buried—here."

"Do you feel buried?"

She nodded. "Oh, yes."

His face was grave. "And doesn't the school work—help?"

She caught her breath. "That's the best part of it. You see I love—the children."

He flashed a quick glance at her. "Then you're lonely sometimes?"

"Yes."

"I fancy these people aren't exactly—your kind. I wish you'd come and see my mother. She's awfully worth while, you know. And she'd be so glad to have you."

She found herself saying, "My grandmother was Cynthia Warfield. She knew your grandfather. I have some old letters. I think your mother might like to see them."

"No wonder I've been puzzling over you! Cynthia Warfield's portrait hangs in our library. And you're like your grandmother. Only you're young and—alive."

Again his ringing laugh and her own to meet it. She felt so young and happy. So very, very young, and so very, very happy!

Mrs. Bower, appearing importantly, announced supper. Beyond the hall, through the open door of the dining-room they could see the loaded table with the tureens of steaming oysters at each end.

There was at once a rollicking stampede.

Anne leaned down to wake Peggy. The child opened her heavy eyes, and murmured: "I want a drink."

Richard glanced at her. "Hello, hello," he said, quickly. "What's the matter, Pussy?"

"I'm not Pussy—I'm Peggy." The child was ready for tears.

He picked her up in his arms and carried her to the light. With careful finger he lifted the heavy eyelids and touched the hot little cheeks. "How long has she been this way?" he asked Anne.

"Just since supper. Is there anything the matter with her? Is she really sick, Dr. Brooks?"

"Measles," he said succinctly. "You'd better get her straight to bed."

CHAPTER VI

In Which a Gray Plush Pussy Cat Supplies a Theme.

ANNE at the top of the stairs talked to Geoffrey Fox at the foot.

"But you really ought not to stay."

"Why not?"

"Because if you haven't had the measles you might get them, and, besides, poor Mrs. Bower is so busy."

"Why not tell me the truth? You don't want me to stay."

"What difference can it possibly make to me?"

"It may make a great difference," Geoffrey said, quietly, "whether I go or stay, but we won't talk of that. I am here. All my traps, bag and baggage, typewriter and trunks—books and bathrobe—and yet you want to send me away."

"I haven't anything to do with it. But the house is closed to every one."

"And everything smells of antiseptics. I rather like that. I spent six weeks in a hospital once. I had a nervous breakdown, and the quiet was heavenly, and all the nurses were angels."

She would not smile. "Of course if you will stay," she said, "you must take things as they come. Mrs. Bower will send your meals up to you. She won't have time to set a company table."

"I'm not company; let me eat with the rest of you."

She hesitated. "You wouldn't like it. I don't like it. There's no service, you see—we all just help ourselves."

"I can help myself."

She shook her head. "It will be easier for Mrs. Bower to bring it up."

He climbed three steps and stopped. "Are you going to do all the nursing?"

"I shall do some of it. Peggy is really ill. There are complications. And Mrs. Bower and Beulah have so much to do. We shall have to close the school. Dr. Brooks wants to save as many as possible from having it."

"So Brooks is handling Peggy's case."

"Of course. Peter Bower knew his grandfather."

"Well, it is something to have a grandfather. And to follow in his footsteps."

But her mind was not on grandfathers. "Dr. Brooks will be here in an hour and I must get Peggy's room ready. And will you please look after yourself for a little while? Eric will attend to your trunks."

It took Geoffrey all the morning to settle. He

heard Richard come and go. At noon Anne brought up his tray.

Opening the door to her knock, he protested. "You shouldn't have done it."

"Why not? It is all in the day's work. And I am not going to be silly about it any more."

"You were never silly about it."

"Yes, I was. But I have worked it all out in my mind. My bringing up the tray to you won't make me any less than I am or any more. It is the way we feel about ourselves that counts—not what other people think of us."

"So you don't care what I think of you?"

"No, not if I am doing the things I think are right."

"And you don't care what Richard Brooks thinks?"

The color mounted. "No," steadily.

"Nor Miss Chesley?"

"Of course not."

"Not of course. You do care. You'd hate it if you thought they'd criticize. And you'd cry after you went to bed."

She felt that such clairvoyance was uncanny. "I wouldn't cry."

"Well, you'd feel like it."

"Please don't talk about me in that way. It really doesn't make any difference how I feel, does it? And your lunch is getting cold."

"What made you bring it? Why didn't you let Mrs. Bower or Beulah?"

"Mrs. Bower is lying down, and Beulah has been ironing all the morning."

"The next time call me, and I'll wait upon myself."

"Perhaps I shall." She surveyed his tray. "I've forgotten the cream for your coffee."

"I don't take cream. Oh, please don't go. I want you to see my books and my other belongings."

He had brought dozens of books, a few pictures, a little gilded Chinese god, a bronze bust of Napoleon.

"Everything has a reason for being dragged around with me. That etching of Helleu's is like my little sister, Mimi, who is at school in a convent, and who constitutes my whole family. The gilded Chinese god is a mascot—the Napoleon intrigues the imagination."

"Do you think so much of Napoleon?" coldly. "He was a little great man. I'd rather talk to my children of George Washington."

"You women have a grudge against him because of Josephine."

"Yes. He killed something in himself when he put her from him. And the world knew it, and his downfall began. He forgot that love is the greatest thing in the world."

How lovely she was, all fire and feeling!

"Jove," he said, staring, "if you could write, you'd make people sit up and listen. You've kept your dreams. That's what the world wants—the stuff that dreams are made of. And most of us have lost ours by the time we know how to put things on paper."

For days the sound of Geoffrey's typewriter could be heard in the hall. "Does it disturb Peggy?" he asked Anne late one night as he met her on the stairs.

"No; her room is too far away. You were so good to send her the lovely toys. She adores the plush pussy cat."

"I like cats. They are coy—and caressing. Dogs are too frankly adoring."

"The eternal masculine." She smiled at him. "Is your work coming on?"

"I have a first chapter. May I read it to you?"

"Please—I should love it."

She was glad to sit quietly by the big fireplace. With eyes half-closed, she listened to the opening sentences. But as he proceeded, her listlessness vanished. And when he laid down the manuscript she was leaning forward, her slim hands clasped tensely on her knees, her eyes wide with interest.

"Oh, oh," she told him, "how do you know it all—how can you make them live and breathe—like that?"

For a moment he did not answer, then he said, "I don't know how I do it. No artist knows how he creates. It is like Life and Death—and other miracles. If I could keep to this pace, I'd have a masterpiece. But I shan't keep to it."

"Why not?"

"I never do."

"But this time—with such a beginning."

"Will you be my critic, Mistress Anne? Let me read to you now and then—like this?"

"I am afraid I should spoil you with praise. It all seems so—wonderful."

"You can't spoil me, and I like to be wonderful."

In spite of his egotism, she found herself modifying her first unfavorable estimate of him. His quick eager speech, his mobile mouth, his mop of dark hair, his white restless hands, his long-lashed near-sighted eyes, these contributed a personality which had in it nothing commonplace or conventional.

For three nights he read to her. On the fourth he had nothing to read. "It is the same old story," he burst out passionately. "I see mountain peaks, then, suddenly, darkness falls and my brain is blank."

"Wait a little," she told him; "it will come back."

"But it never comes back. All of my good beginnings flat out toward the end. And that's why I'm pot-boiling, because," bitterly, "I am not big enough for anything else."

"You mustn't say such things. We achieve only as we believe in ourselves. Don't you know that? If you believe that things are going to end badly, they will end badly."

"Oh, wise little school-teacher, how do you know?"

"It is what I teach my children. That they must believe in themselves."

"What else do you teach them?"

"That they must believe in God and love their country, and then nothing can happen to them that they cannot bear. It is only when one loses faith and hope that life doesn't seem worth while."

"And do you believe all that you teach?"

Silence. She was gazing into the fire thoughtfully. "I believe it, but I don't always live up to it. That's the hard part, acting up the things that we believe. I tell my children that, and I tell them, too, that they must always keep on trying."

She was delicious with her theories and her seriousness. And she was charming in the crisp blue gown that had been her uniform since the beginning of Peggy's illness.

He laughed and leaned toward her. "Oh, Mistress Anne, Mistress Anne, how much you have to learn."

She stood up. "Perhaps I know more than you think."

"Are you angry because I said that? But I love your arguments."

His frankness was irresistible; she could not take offense so she sat down again.

"Perhaps," she said, hesitating, "you might understand better how I feel if I told you about my Great-uncle Rodman Warfield. When he was very young he went to Paris to study art, and he attracted much attention. Then after a while he began to find the people interested him more than pictures. You see we come from old Maryland stock. My grandmother, Cynthia Warfield, was one of the proudest women in Carroll. But Uncle Rodman doesn't believe in family pride, not the kind that sticks its nose in the air; and so when he came back to America he resolved to devote his talents to glorifying the humble. He lived among the poor and he painted pictures of them. And then one day there was an accident. He saved a woman from drowning between a ferry-boat and the slip, and he hurt his back. There was a sort of paralysis that affected the nerves of his hand—and he couldn't paint any more. He came to us—when I was a little girl. My father was dead, and mother had a small income. We couldn't afford servants, so mother sewed and Uncle Rod and I did the housework. And it was he who tried to teach me that work is the one royal thing in our lives."

"Where is he now?"

"When mother died our income was cut off, and —I had to leave him. He could have a home with

a cousin of ours and teach her children. I might have stayed with her, but there was nothing for me to do. And we felt that it was best for me to—find myself. So I came here. He writes to me—every day——" She drew a long breath. "I don't think I could live without letters from my Uncle Rod."

"So you are really a princess in disguise, and you would love to stick your nose in the air, but you don't quite dare?"

"I shouldn't love to do anything snobbish."

"There is no use in pretending that you are humble when you are not. And your Great-uncle Rodman is a dreamer. Life is what it is, not what we want it to be."

"I like his dreams," she said, simply, "and I want to be as good as he thinks I am."

"You don't have to be too good. You are too pretty. Do you know that Cynthia Warfield's granddaughter is a great beauty, Mistress Anne?"

"I know that I don't like to have you say such things to me."

"Why not?"

"I am not sure that you mean them."

"But I do mean them," eagerly.

"Perhaps," stiffly, "but we won't talk about it. I must go up to Peggy."

Peter Bower was with Peggy. He was a round and red-faced Peter with the kindest heart in the world. And Peggy was the apple of his eye.

"Do you think she is better, Miss Anne?"

"Indeed I do. And now you go and get some sleep, Mr. Bower. I'll stay with her until four, and then I'll wake Beulah."

He left her with the daily paper and a new magazine, and with the light shaded, Anne sat down to read. Peggy was sleeping soundly with both arms around the plush pussy which Geoffrey had given her. It was a most lifelike pussy, gray-striped with green glass eyes and with a little red mouth that opened and mewed when you pulled a string. Hung by a ribbon around the pussy cat's neck was a little brass bell. As the child stirred in her sleep the little bell tinkled. There was no sound except the sighing of the wind. All the house was still.

The paper was full of news of the great war. Anne read it carefully, and the articles on the same subject in the magazine. She felt that she must know as much as possible, so that she might speak to her children intelligently of the great conflict. Of Belgium and England, of France and Germany. She must be fair, with all those clear eyes focussed upon her. She must, indeed, attempt a sort of neutrality. But how could she be neutral, with her soul burning candles on the altar of the allies?

As she read on and on in the silence of the night, there came to her the thought of the dead on the field of battle. What of those shining souls? What

happened after men went out into the Great Beyond? Hun and Norman, Saxon and Slav, among the shadows were they all at Peace?

Again the child stirred and the little bell tinkled. It seemed to Anne that the bell and the staring eyes were symbolic. The gay world played its foolish music and looked with unseeing eyes upon murder and madness. If little Peggy had lain there dead, the little bell would still have tinkled, the wide green eyes would still have stared.

But Peggy, thank God, was alive. Her face, like old ivory against the whiteness of her pillow, showed the ravages of illness, but the doctor had said she was out of danger.

The child stirred and spoke. "Anne," she whispered, "tell me about the bears."

Anne knelt beside the bed. "We must be very quiet," she said. "I don't want to wake Beulah."

So very softly she told the story. Of the Daddy Bear and the Mother Bear and the Baby Bear; of the little House in the Woods; of Goldilocks, the three bowls of soup, the three chairs, the three beds——

In the midst of it all Peggy sat up. "I want a bowl of soup like the little bear."

"But, darling, you've had your lovely supper."

"I don't care." Peggy's lip quivered. "I'm just starved, and I can't wait until I have my breakfast."

"Let me tell you the rest of the story."

"No. I don't want to hear it. I want a bowl of soup like the little bear's."

"Maybe it wasn't nice soup, Peggy."

"But you *said* it was. You said that the Mother Bear made it out of the corn from the farmer's field, and the cock that the fox brought, and she seasoned it with herbs that she found at the edge of the forest. You said yourself it was *dee-licious* soup, Miss Anne."

She began to cry weakly.

"Dearie, don't. If I go down into the kitchen and warm some broth will you keep very still?"

"Yes. Only I don't want just broth. I want soup like the little bear had."

"Peggy, I am not a fairy godmother. I can't wave my wand and get things in the middle of the night."

"Well, anyhow, you can put it in a blue bowl, you *said* the little bear had his in a blue bowl, and you said he had ten crackers in it. I want ten crackers ——"

The kitchen was warm and shadowy, with the light of a kerosene lamp above the cook-stove. Anne flitted about noiselessly, finding a little saucepan, finding a little blue bowl, breaking one cracker into ten bits to satisfy the insistent Peggy, stirring the bubbling broth with a spoon as she bent above it.

And as she stirred, she was thinking of Geoffrey Fox, not as she had thought of Richard, with pulses throbbing and heart fluttering, but calmly; of his

book and of the little bust of Napoleon, and of the things that she had been reading about the war.

She poured the soup out of the saucepan, and set it steaming on a low tray. Then quietly she ascended the stairs. Geoffrey's door was wide open and his room was empty, but through the dimness of the long hall she discerned his figure, outlined against a wide window at the end. Back of him the world under the light of the waning moon showed black and white like a great wash drawing.

He turned as she came toward him. "I heard you go down," he said. "I've been writing all night—and I've written—perfect rot." His hands went out in a despairing gesture.

Composed and quiet in her crisp linen, she looked up at him. "Write about the war," she said; "take three soldiers,—French, German and English. Make their hearts hot with hatred, and then—let them lie wounded together on the field of battle in the darkness of the night—with death ahead—and let each one tell his story—let them be drawn together by the knowledge of a common lot—a common destiny ——"

"What made you think of that?" he demanded.

"Peggy's pussy cat." She told him of the staring eyes and the tinkling bell. "But I mustn't stay. Peggy is waiting for her soup."

He gazed at her with admiration. "How do you do it?"

"Do what?"

"Dictate a heaven-born plot to me in one breath, and speak of Peggy's soup in the next. You are like Werther's Charlotte."

"I am like myself. And we mustn't stay here talking. It is time we were both in bed. I am going to wake Beulah when I have fed Peggy."

He made a motion of salute. "The princess serves," he said, laughing.

But as she passed on, calm and cool and collected, carrying the tray before her like the famous Chocolate lady on the backs of magazines, the laugh died on his lips. She was not to be laughed at, this little Anne Warfield, who held her head so high!

CHAPTER VII

In Which Geoffrey Writes of Soldiers and Their Souls.

EVE CHESLEY writing from New York was still in a state of rebellion.

"And now they all have the *measles.* Richard, it needed only your letter to let me know what you have done to yourself. When I think of you, tearing around the country on your old white horse, with your ears tied up—I am sure you tie up your ears—it is a perfect nightmare. Oh, Dicky Boy, and you might be here specializing on appendicitis or something equally reasonable and modern. I feel as if the world were upside down. Do children in New York ever have the measles? Somehow I never hear of it. It seems to me almost archaic —like mumps. Nobody in society ever has the mumps, or if they do, they keep it a dead secret, like a family skeleton, or a hard-working grandfather.

"Your letters are so short, and they don't tell me what you do with your evenings. Don't you miss us? Don't you miss me? And our good times? And the golden lights of the city? Winifred Ames wants you for a dinner dance on the twentieth.

Can't you turn the measley kiddies over to some one else and come? Say 'yes,' Dicky, dear. Oh, you musn't be just a country doctor. You were born for bigger things, and some day you will see it and be sorry."

Richard's letter, dashed off between visits to the "measley kiddies," was as follows:

"There aren't any bigger things, Eve, and I shan't be sorry. I can't get away just now, and to be frank, I don't want to. There is nothing dull about measles. They have aspects of interest unknown to a dinner dance. I am not saying that I don't miss some of the things that I have left behind —my good friends—you and Pip and the Dutton-Ames. But there are compensations. And you should see my horse. He's a heavy fellow like a horse of Flanders; I call him Ben because he is big and gentle. I don't tie up my ears, but I should if I wanted to. And please don't think I am ungrateful because I am not coming to the Dutton-Ames dance. Why don't you and the rest drift down here for a week-end? Next Friday, the Friday after? Let me know. There's good skating now that the snows have stopped."

He signed it and sealed it and on the way to see little Peggy he dropped it into the box. Then he entirely forgot it. It was a wonderful morning, with a sky like sapphire above a white world, the dog Toby racing ahead of him, and big gentle Ben at a trot.

At the innocent word "compensations" Evelyn Chesley pricked up her ears. What compensations? She got Philip Meade on the telephone.

"Richard has asked us for the week-end, Pip. Could we go in your car?"

"Unless it snows again. But why seek such solitudes, Eve?"

"I want to take Richard a fur cap. I am sure he ties up his ears."

"Send it."

"In a cold-blooded parcel post package? I will not. Pip, if you won't go, I'll kidnap Aunt Maude, and carry her off by train."

"And leave me out? Not much. 'Whither thou goest ——'"

"Even when I am on the trail of another man? Pip, you are a dear idiot."

"The queen's fool."

So it was decided that on Friday, weather permitting, they should go.

Aunt Maude, protesting, said, "It isn't proper, Eve. Girls in my day didn't go running around after men. They sat at home and waited."

"Why wait, dearest? When I see a good thing I go for it."

"Eve ——!"

"And anyhow I am not running after Dicky. I am rescuing him."

"From what?"

"From his mother, dearest, and his own dreams. Their heads are in the clouds, and they don't know it."

"I think myself that Nancy is making a mistake."

"More of a mistake than she understands." The lightness left Eve's voice. She was silent as she ate an orange and drank a cup of clear coffee. Eve's fashionable and adorable thinness was the result of abstinence and of exercise. Facing daily Aunt Maude's plumpness, she had sacrificed ease and appetite on the altar of grace and beauty.

Yet Aunt Maude's plumpness was not the plumpness of inelegance. Nothing about Aunt Maude was inelegant. She was of ancient Knickerbocker stock. She had been petrified by years of social exclusiveness into something less amiable than her curves and dimples promised. Her hair was gray, and not much of it was her own. Her curled bang and high coronet braid were held flatly against her head by a hair net. She wore always certain chains and bracelets which proclaimed the family's past prosperity. Her present prosperity was evidenced by the somewhat severe richness of her attire. Her complexion was delicately yellow and her wrinkles were deep. Her eyes were light blue and coldly staring. In manner she seemed to set herself against any world but her own.

The money on which the two women lived was Aunt Maude's. She expected to make Eve her heir.

In the meantime she gave her a generous allowance and indulged most of her whims.

The latest whim was the new breakfast room in which they now sat, with the winter sun streaming through the small panes of a wide south window.

For sixty odd years Aunt Maude had eaten her breakfast promptly at eight from a tray in her own room. It had been a hearty breakfast of hot breads and chops. At one she had lunched decently in the long dim dining-room in a mid-Victorian atmosphere of Moquet and marble mantels, carved walnut and plush curtains.

And now back of this sacred dining-room Eve had built out a structure of glass and of stone, looking over a scrap of enclosed city garden, and furnished in black and white, relieved by splashes of brilliant color. Aunt Maude hated the green parrot and the flame-colored fishes in the teakwood aquarium. She thought that Eve looked like an actress in the little jacket with the apple-green ribbons which she wore when she came down at twelve.

"Aren't we ever going to eat any more luncheons?" had been Aunt Maude's plaintive question when she realized that she was in the midst of a gastronomic revolution.

"Nobody does, dearest. If you are really up-to-date you breakfast and dine—the other meals are vague—illusory."

"People in my time ——" Aunt Maude had stated.

"People in your time," Evelyn had interrupted flippantly, "were wise and good. Nobody wants to be wise and good in these days. We want to be smart and sophisticated. Your good old stuffy dining-rooms were like your good old stuffy consciences. Now my breakfast room is symbolic—the green and white for the joy of living, and the black for my sins."

She stood up on tiptoe to feed the parrot. "Tomorrow," she announced, "I am to have a black cat. I found one at the cat show—with green eyes. And I am going to match his cushion to his eyes."

"I'd like a cat," Aunt Maude said, unexpectedly, "but I can't say that I care for black ones. The grays are the best mousers."

Eve looked at her reproachfully. "Do you think that cats catch mice?" she demanded,—"up-to-date cats? They sit on cushions and add emphasis to the color scheme. Winifred Ames has a yellow one to go with her primrose panels."

The telephone rang. A maid answered it. "It is for you, Miss Evelyn."

"It is Pip," Eve said, as she turned from the telephone; "he's coming up."

Aunt Maude surveyed her. "You're not going to receive him as you are?"

"As I am? Why not?"

"Eve, go to your room and put something *on*," Aunt Maude agonized; "when I was a girl ——"

Evelyn dropped a kiss on her cheek. "When you were a girl, Aunt Maude, you were very pretty, and you wore very low necks and short sleeves on the street, and short dresses—and—and ——"

Remembering the family album, Aunt Maude stopped her hastily. "It doesn't make any difference what I wore. You are not going to receive any gentleman in that ridiculous jacket."

Eve surveyed herself in an oval mirror set above a console-table. "I think I look rather nice. And Pip would like me in anything. Aunt Maude, it's a queer world for us women. The men that we want don't want us, and the men that we don't want adore us. The emancipation of women will come when they can ask men to marry them."

She was ruffling the feathers on the green parrot's head. He caught her finger carefully in his claw and crooned.

Aunt Maude rose. "I had twenty proposals—your uncle's was the twentieth. I loved him at first sight, and I loved him until he left me."

"Uncle was a dear," Eve agreed, "but suppose he hadn't asked you, Aunt Maude?"

"I should have remained single to the end of my days."

"Oh, no, you wouldn't, Aunt Maude. You would have married the wrong man—that's the way it always ends—if women didn't marry the wrong men half the world would be old maids."

Philip Meade was much in love. He had money, family, good looks and infinite patience. Some day he meant to marry Eve. But he was aware that she was not yet in love with him.

She came down gowned for the street. And thus kept him waiting. "It was Aunt Maude's fault. She made me dress. Pip, where shall we walk?"

He did not care. He cared only to be with her. He told her so, and she smiled up at him wistfully. "You're such a dear—I wish ——"

She stopped.

"What do you wish?" he asked eagerly.

"For the—sun. You are the moon. May I call you my moon-man, Pip?"

He knew what she meant. "Yes. But you must remember that some day I shall not be content to take second place—I shall fight for the head of your line of lovers."

"Line of lovers—*Pip*. I don't like the sound of it."

"Why not? It's true."

Again she was wistful. "I wonder how many of them really—care? Pip, it is the one-proposal girl who is lucky. She has no problems. She simply takes the man she can get!"

They were swinging along Fifth Avenue. He stopped at a flower shop and bought her a tight little knot of yellow roses which matched her hair. She was in brown velvet with brown boots and brown

furs. Her skin showed pink and white in the clear cold. She and the big man by her side were a pair good to look upon, and people turned to look.

Coming to a famous jewel shop she turned in. "I am going to have all of Aunt Maude's opals set in platinum to make a long chain. She gave them to me; and there'll be diamonds at intervals. I want to wear smoke-colored tulle at Winifred Ames' dinner dance—and the opals will light it."

Philip Meade's mind was not poetic, yet as his eyes followed Evelyn, he was aware that this was an atmosphere which belonged to her. Her beauty was opulent, needing richness to set it off, needing the shine of jewels, the shimmer of silk ——

If he married her he could give her—a tiara of diamonds—a necklace of pearls—a pendant—a ring. His eyes swept the store adorning her.

When they came out he said, "I think I am showing a greatness of mind which should win your admiration."

"Why?"

"In taking you to Crossroads."

"Why?"

"You know why. Shall you write to Brooks that we are coming?"

"No. I want it to be a surprise. That's half the fun."

But there was nothing funny about it, as it proved, for it was on that very Friday morning that

Richard had found Peggy much better, and Anne very pale with circles under her eyes.

He went away, and later his mother called Anne up. She asked her to spend the day at Crossroads. Richard would come for her and would bring her home after dinner.

Anne, with a fluttering sense of excitement, packed her ruffled white frock in a little bag, and was ready when Richard arrived.

At the gate they met Geoffrey Fox. The young doctor stopped his horse. "Come and have lunch with us, Fox?"

"I'm sorry. But I must get to work. How long are you going to keep Miss Warfield?"

"As late as we can."

"To-night?"

"Yes."

"I have a chapter ready to read to her, and you ask her to eat with you as if she were any every-day sort of person. Did you know that she is to play Beatrice to my Dante?"

"Don't be silly," Anne said; "you mustn't listen to him, Dr. Brooks."

Richard's eyes went from one to the other. "What do you know of Fox?" he asked, as they drove on.

"Nothing, except that he is writing a book."

"I'll ask Eve about him; she's a lion-hunter and she's in with a lot of literary lights."

Even as he spoke Evelyn was speeding toward him in Philip's car. He had forgotten her and his invitation for the week-end. But she had not forgotten, and she sparkled and glowed as she thought of Richard's royal welcome. For how could she know, as she drew near and nearer, that he was welcoming another guest, taking off the little teacher's old brown coat, noting the flush on her young cheeks, the pretty appeal of her manner to his mother.

"You are sure I won't be in the way, Mrs. Brooks?"

"My dear, my dear, of course not. Richard has been telling me that your grandmother was Cynthia Warfield. Did you know that my father was in love with Cynthia before he married my mother?"

"The letters said so."

"I shall want to see them. And to hear about your Great-uncle Rodman. We thought at one time that he was going to be famous, and then came that dreadful accident."

They had her in a big chair now, with a high back which peaked over her head and Nancy had another high-backed chair, and Richard standing on the hearth-rug surveyed the two of them contentedly.

"Mother, I am going to give myself fifteen minutes right here and a half hour for lunch, and then I'll go out and make calls, and you and Miss War-

field can take a nap and be ready to talk to me to-night."

Anne smiled up at him. "Do you always make everybody mind?"

"I try to boss mother a bit—but I am not sure that I succeed."

Before luncheon was served Cynthia Warfield's picture, which hung in the library, was pointed out to Anne. She was made to stand under it, so that they might see that her hair was the same color—and her eyes. Cynthia was painted in pink silk with a petticoat of fine lace, and with pearls in her hair.

"Some day," Anne said, "when my ship comes in, I am going to wear stiff pink silk and pearls and buckled slippers and yards and yards of old lace."

"No, you're not," Richard told her; "you are going to wear white with more than a million ruffles, and little flat black shoes. Mother, you should have seen her at Beulah Bower's party."

"White is always nice for a young girl," said pleasant Nancy Brooks.

The dining-room looked out upon the river, with an old-fashioned bay window curving out. The table was placed near the window. Anne's eyes brightened as she looked at the table. It was just as she had pictured it, all twinkling glass and silver, and with Richard at the head of it. But what she had not pictured was the moment in which he stood to say the simple and beautiful grace which his grandfather

had said years before in that room of many memories.

The act seemed to set him apart from other men. It added dignity and strength to his youth and radiance. He was master of a house, and he felt that his house should have a soul!

Anne, writing of it the next night to her Uncle Rod, spoke of that simple grace:

"Uncle Rod, it seemed to me that while most of the world was forgetting God, he was remembering Him. Nobody says grace at Bower's—and sometimes I don't even say it in my heart. He looked like a saint as he stood there with the window behind him. Wasn't there a soldier saint—St. Michael?

"Could you imagine Jimmie Ford saying grace? Could you imagine him even at the head of his own table? When I used to think of marrying him, I had a vision of eternal motor riding in his long blue car—with the world rushing by in a green streak.

"But I am not wanting much to talk of Jimmie Ford. Though perhaps before I finish this I shall whisper what I thought of the things you had to say of him in your letter.

"Well, after lunch I had a nap, and then there was dinner with David Tyson in an old-fashioned dress-suit, and Mrs. Nancy in thin black with pearls, and St. Michael groomed and shining.

"It was all quite like a slice of Heaven after my hard days nursing Peggy. We had coffee in the

library, and then Dr. Richard and I went into the music-room and I played for him. I sang the song that you like about the 'Lady of the West Country':

> "'I think she was the most beautiful lady
> That ever was in the West Country.
> But beauty vanishes, beauty passes,
> However rare, rare it be;
> And when I crumble who shall remember
> That Lady of the West Country?'

"He liked it and made me sing it twice, and then a dreadful thing happened. A motor stopped at the door and some one ran up the steps. We heard voices and turned around, and there were the Lovely Ladies back again with the two men, and a chauffeur in the background with the bags!

"It seems that they had motored down at Dr. Richard's invitation for a week-end, and that he had forgotten it!

"Of course you are asking, 'Why was it a dreadful thing, my dear?' Uncle Rod, I stood there smiling a welcome at them all, and Dr. Richard said: 'You know Miss Warfield, Eve,' and then she said, 'Oh, yes,' in a frigid fashion, and I knew by her manner that back in her mind she was remembering that I was the girl who had waited on the table!

"Oh, you needn't tell me that I mustn't feel that way, Uncle Rod. I feel it, and feel it, and *feel* it. How can I help feeling it when I know that if I

had Evelyn Chesley's friends and Evelyn's fortune, people would look on Me-Myself in quite a different way. You see, they would judge me by the Outside-Person part of me, which would be soft and silky and secure, and not dowdy and diffident.

"Oh, Uncle Rod, is Geoffrey Fox right? And have you and I been dreaming all these years? The rest of the world doesn't dream; it makes money and spends it, and makes money and spends it, and makes money and spends it. Nobody but you and I is old-fashioned enough to want sunsets; the rest of them want motor cars and yachts and trips to Europe. That was what Jimmie Ford wanted, and that was why he didn't want me.

"There, I have said it, Uncle Rod. Your letter made me know it. Perhaps I have hoped and hoped a little that he might come back to me. I have made up scenes in my mind of how I would scorn him and send him away, and indeed I would send him away, for there isn't any love left—only a lot of hurt pride.

"To think that he saw you and spoke to you and didn't say one word about me. And just a year ago at Christmas time, do you remember, Uncle Rod? The flowers he sent, and the pearl ring—and now the flowers are dead, and the ring went back to him.

"Oh, I can't talk about it even to you!

"Well, all the evening Eve Chesley held the center of the stage. And the funny part of it was

that I found myself much interested in the things she had to tell. Her life is a sort of Arabian Nights' existence. She lives with her Aunt Maude in a big house east of Central Park, and she told about the green parrot for her new black and white breakfast room, and the flame-colored fishes in an aquarium —and she is having her opals set in platinum to go with a silver gown that she is to wear at the Dutton-Ames dance.

"I like the Dutton-Ames. He is dark and massive—a splendid foil for his wife's slenderness and fairness. They are much in love with each other. He always sits beside her if he can, and she looks up at him and smiles, and last night I saw him take her hand where it hung among the folds of her gown, and he held it after that—and it made me think of father and mother—and of the way they cared. Jimmie Ford could never care like that—but Dr. Richard could. He cares that way for his mother—he could care for the woman he loved.

"He took me home in Mr. Meade's limousine. It was moonlight, and he told the chauffeur to drive the long way by the river road.

"I like him very much. He believes in things, and—and I rather think that *his* ship is packed with dreams—but I am not sure, Uncle Rod."

It was when Anne had come in from her moonlight ride with Richard, shutting the door carefully

behind her, that she found Geoffrey Fox waiting for her in the big front room.

"Oh," she stammered.

"And you really have the grace to blush? Do you know what time it is?"

"No."

"Twelve! Midnight! And you have been riding with only the chauffeur for chaperone."

"Well?"

"And you have kept me waiting. That's the worst of it. You may break all of the conventional commandments if you wish. But you mustn't keep me waiting."

His laugh rang high, his cheeks were flushed. Anne had never seen him in a mood like this. In his loose coat with a flowing black tie and with his ruffled hair curling close about his ears, he looked boyish and handsome like the pictures she had seen of Byron in an old book.

"Sit down, sit down," he was insisting; "now that you are here, you must listen."

"It is too late," she demurred, "and we'll wake everybody up."

"No, we shan't. The doors are shut. I saw to that. We are as much alone as if we were in a desert. And I can't sleep until I have read that chapter to you—please——"

Reluctantly, with her wraps on, she sat down.

"Take off your hat."

He stood over her while she removed it, and helped her out of her coat. "Look at me," he said, peremptorily. "I hate to read to wandering eyes."

He threw himself into a chair and began:

"*So they marched away—young Franz from Nuremberg and young George from London, and Michel straight from the vineyards on the coast of France.*"

That was the beginning of Geoffrey Fox's famous story: "The Three Souls," the story which was to bring him something of fortune as well as of fame, the story which had been suggested to Anne Warfield by the staring eyes of Peggy's pussy cat.

As she listened, Anne saw three youths starting out from home, marching gaily through the cities and steadily along the roads—marching, marching—Franz from Nuremburg, young George from London, and Michel from his sunlighted vineyards, drawing close and closer, unconscious of the fate that was bringing them together, thinking of the glory of battle, and of the honor of Kaiser and King and of the Republic.

The shadow of the great conflict falls gradually upon them. They meet the wounded, the refugees, they hear the roar of the guns, they listen to the tales of those who have been in the thick of it.

Then come privations, suffering, winter in the trenches—Franz on one side, young George on the other, and Michel; then fighting—fear ——

Geoffrey stopped there. "Shall I have them afraid?"

"I think they would be afraid. But they would keep on fighting, and that would be heroic."

She added, "How well you do it!"

"This part is easy. It will be the last of it that I shall find hard—when I deal with their souls."

"Oh, you must show at the last that it is because of their souls that they are brothers. Each man has had a home, he has had love, each of them has had his hopes and dreams for the future, for his middle-age and his old age, and now there is to be no middle-age, no old age—and in their knowledge of their common lot their hatred dies."

"I am afraid I can't do it," he said, moodily. "I should have to swing myself out into an atmosphere which I have never breathed."

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, I am of the earth—earthy. I have sold my birthright, I have yearned for the flesh-pots, I have fed among—swine. I have done all of the other things which haven't Biblical sanction. And now you expect me to write of souls."

"I expect you to give to the world your best. You speak of your talent as if it were a little thing. And it is not a little thing."

"Do you mean that ——?"

"I mean that it is—God given."

Out of a long silence he said: "I thank you for

saying that. Nobody has ever said such a thing to me before."

He let her go then. And as she stood before her door a little later and whispered, "Good-night," he caught her hand and held it. "Mistress Anne—will you remember me—now and then—in your little white prayers?"

CHAPTER VIII

In Which a Green-Eyed Monster Grips Eve.

EVELYN, coming down late on the morning after her unexpected arrival, asked: "How did you happen to have her here, Dicky?"

"Who?"

"The little waitress?"

"Eve——" warningly.

"Well, then, the little school-teacher."

"Since when did you become a snob, Eve?"

"Don't be so sharp about it, Dicky. I'm not a snob. But you must admit that it was rather surprising to find her here, when the last time I saw her she was passing things at the Bower's table."

"She is a granddaughter of Cynthia Warfield."

"Who's Cynthia? I never heard of her."

"You have seen her portrait in our library."

"Which portrait?"

He led the way and showed it to her. Eve, looking at it thoughtfully, remarked, "Why should a girl like that lower herself by serving——?"

"She probably doesn't feel that she can lower herself by anything. She is what she is."

She shrugged. "You know as well as I that

people can't do such things—and get away with it. She may be very nice and all that ——"

"She is nice."

"Well, don't lose your temper over it, and don't fall in love with her, Dicky."

"Why not?"

"Haven't you done enough foolish things without doing—that?"

"Doing what?" ominously.

"Oh, you know what I mean," impatiently. "Aren't you ever going to come to your senses, Dicky?"

"Suppose we don't talk of it, Eve."

She found herself wanting to talk of it. She wanted to rage and rant. She was astonished at the primitiveness of her emotions. She had laughed her way through life and had prided herself on the dispassionateness of her point of view. And now it was only by the exercise of the utmost self-control that she was able to swing the conversation toward other topics.

The coming of the rest of the party eased things up a little. They had all slept late, and Richard had made a half dozen calls before he had joined Eve in the Garden Room. He had stopped at David's, and had heard that on Monday there was to be a drag-hunt and breakfast at the club. David hoped they would all stay over for it.

"Cousin David has a bunch of weedy-looking

hounds," Richard explained; "he lets them run as they please, and they've been getting up a fox nearly every night. He thought you might like to ride up to the ridge in the moonlight and have a view of them. I can get you some pretty fair mounts at Bower's."

There was a note of wistful appeal in Eve's voice. "Do you really want us, Dicky?"

He smiled at her. "Of course. Don't be silly, Eve."

She saw that she was forgiven, and smiled back. She had not slept much the night before. She had heard Richard come in after his ride with Anne, and she had been waked later by the sound of the telephone. In the room next to hers Richard's subdued voice had answered. And presently there had been the sound of his careful footsteps on the stairs.

She had crept out of bed and between the curtains had looked out. The world was full of the shadowy paleness which comes with the waning of the moon. The road beyond the garden showed like a dull gray ribbon against the blackness of the hills. On this road appeared presently Richard on his big white horse, the dog Toby, a shadow among the shadows as he ran on ahead of them.

On and on they sped up the dull gray road, a spectral rider on a spectral horse. She had wondered where he might be going. It must have been some sudden and urgent call to take him out thus

in the middle of the night. For the first time she realized what his life meant. He could never really be at his ease. Always there was before him the possibility of some dread adventure—death might be on its way at this very moment.

Wide-awake and wrapped in her great rug, she had waited, and after a time Richard had returned. The dawn was rising on the hills, and the world was pink. His head was up and he was urging his horse to a swift gallop.

When at last he reached his room, she had gone to bed. But when she slept it was to dream that the man on the white horse was riding away from her, and that when she called he would not come.

But now with his smile upon her, she decided that she was making too much of it all. The affair with the little school-teacher might not be in the least serious. Men had their fancies, and Dicky was not a fool.

She knew her power over him, and her charm. His little boyhood had been heavy with sorrow and soberness; she had lightened it by her gaiety and good nature. Eve had taken her orphaned state philosophically. Her parents had died before she knew them. Her Aunt Maude was rich and gave her everything; she was queen of her small domain. Richard, on the other hand, had been early oppressed by anxieties—his care for his strong little mother, his real affection for his weak father, cul-

minating in the tragedy which had come during his college days. In all the years Eve had been his good comrade and companion. She had cheered him, commanded him, loved him.

And he had loved her. He had never analyzed the quality of his love. She was his good friend, his sister. If he had ever thought of her as his sweetheart or as his wife, it had always been with the feeling that Eve had too much money. No man had a right to live on his wife's bounty.

He had a genuinely happy day with her. He showed her the charming old house which she had never seen. He showed her the schoolhouse, still closed on account of the epidemic. He showed her the ancient ballroom built out in a separate wing.

"A little money would make it lovely, Richard."

"It is lovely without the money."

Winifred Ames spoke earnestly from the window where, with her husband's arm about her, she was observing the sunset. "Some day Tony and I are going to have a house like this—and then we'll be happy."

"Aren't you happy now?" her husband demanded.

"Yes. But not on my own plan, as it were." Then softly so that no one else could hear, "I want just you, Tony—and all the rest of the world away."

"Dear Heart——" He dared not say more, for Pip's envious eyes were upon them.

"When I marry you, Eve, may I hold your hand in public?"

"You may—when I marry you."

"Good. Whenever I lose faith in the bliss of matrimony, I have only to look at Win and Tony to be cheered and sustained by their example."

Nancy, playing the little lovely hostess, agreed. "If they weren't so new-fashioned in every way I should call them an old-fashioned couple."

"Love is never out of fashion, Mrs. Nancy," said Eve; "is it, Dicky Boy?"

"Ask Pip."

"Love," said Philip solemnly, "is the newest thing in the world and the oldest. Each lover is a Columbus discovering an unknown continent."

In the hall the old clock chimed. "Nobody is to dress for dinner," Richard said, "if we are to ride afterward. I'll telephone for the horses."

He telephoned and rode down later on his big Ben to bring the horses up. As he came into the yard at Bower's he saw a light in the old stable. Dismounting, he went to the open door. Anne was with Diogenes. The lantern was set on the step above her, and she was feeding the old drake. Her body was in the shadow, her face luminous. Yet it was a sober little face, set with tired lines. Looking at her, Richard reached a sudden determination.

He would ask her to ride with them to the ridge.

At the sound of his voice she turned and her face changed. "Did I startle you?" he asked.

"No," she smiled at him. "Only I was thinking about you, and there you were." There was no coquetry in her tone; she stated the fact frankly and simply. "Do you remember how you put Toby in here, and how Diogenes hated it?"

"I remember how you looked under the lantern."

"Oh,"—she had not expected that,—"do you?"

"Yes. But I had seen you before. You were standing on a rock with holly in your arms. I saw you from the train throw something into the river. I have often wondered what it was."

"I didn't want to burn my holly wreaths after Christmas. I hate to burn things that have been alive."

"So do I. Eve would say that we were sentimentalists. But I have never quite been able to see why a sentimentalist isn't quite as worthy of respect as a materialist—however, I am not here to argue that. I want you to ride with me to the ridge. To see the foxes by moonlight," he further elucidated. "Run in and get ready. I am to take some horses up for the others."

She rose and reached for her lantern. "The others?" she looked an inquiry over her shoulder.

"Eve and her crowd. They are still at Cross-roads."

She stood irresolute. Then, "I think I'd rather not go."

"Why not?" sharply.

She told him the truth bravely. "I am a little afraid of women like that."

"Of Eve and Winifred? Why?"

"We are people of two worlds, Dr. Brooks—and they feel it."

His conversation with Eve recurring to him, he was not prepared to argue. But he was prepared to have his own way.

"Isn't your world mine?" he demanded. "And you mustn't mind Eve. She's all right when you know her. Just stiffen your backbone, and remember that you are the granddaughter of Cynthia Warfield."

After that she gave in and came down presently in a shabby little habit with her hair tied with a black bow. "It's a good thing it is dark," she said. "I haven't any up-to-date clothes."

As they went along he asked her to go to the hunt breakfast on Monday.

"I can't. School opens and my work begins."

"By Jove, I had forgotten. I shall be glad to hear the bell. When I am riding over the hills it seems to call—as it called to my grandfather and to be saying the same things; it is a great inspiration to have a background like that to one's life. Do you know what I mean?"

She did know, and they talked about it—these two young and eager souls to whom life spoke of things to be done, and done well.

Eve, standing on the steps at Crossroads, saw them coming. "Oh, I'm not going," she said to Winifred passionately.

"Why not?"

"He has that girl with him."

"What girl?"

"Anne Warfield."

Winifred's eyes opened wide. "She's a darling, Eve. I liked her so much last night."

"I don't see why he has to bring her into everything."

"All the men are in love with her; even Tony has eyes for her, and Pip ——"

"What makes you defend her, Win? She isn't one of us, and you know it."

"I don't know it. She belongs to older stock than either you or I, Eve. And if she didn't, don't you know a lady when you see one?"

Eve threw up her hands. "I sometimes think the world is going mad—there aren't any more lines drawn."

"If there were," said Winifred softly, and perhaps a bit maliciously, "I fancy that Anne Warfield might be the one to draw them—and leave us on the wrong side, Eve."

It was Winifred who welcomed Anne, and who

rode beside her later, and it was of Winifred that Anne spoke repentantly as she and Richard rode together in the hills. "I want to take back the things I said about Mrs. Ames. She is just—heavenly sweet."

He smiled. "I knew you would like her," he said. But neither of them mentioned Eve.

For Evelyn's manner had been insufferable. Anne might have been a shadow on the grass, a cloud across the sky, a stone in the road for all the notice she had taken of her. It was a childish thing to do, but then Eve was childish. And she was having the novel experience of being overlooked for the first time by Richard. She was aware, too, that she had offended him deeply and that the cause of her offending was another woman.

When they came to the ridge Richard drew Anne's horse, with his own, among the trees. He left Eve to Pip. Winifred and her husband were with David.

Far off in the distance a steady old hound gave tongue—then came the music of the pack—the swift silent figure of the fox, straight across the open moonlighted space in front of them.

Anne gave a little gasp. "It is old Pete," Richard murmured; "they'll never catch him. I'll tell you about him on the way down."

So as he rode beside her after that perfect hour in which the old fox played with the tumultuous pack, at his ease, monarch of his domain, unmindful of

silent watchers in the shadows, Richard told her of old Pete ; he told her, too, of the traditions of a ghostly fox who now and then troubled the hounds, leading them into danger and sometimes to death.

He went on with her to Bower's, and when he left her he handed her a feathery bit of pine. "I picked it on the ridge," he said. "I don't know whether you feel as I do about the scrub pines of Maryland and of Virginia; somehow they seem to belong, as you and I do, to this country."

When Anne went to her room she stuck the bit of pine in her mirror. Then in an uplifted mood she wrote to Uncle Rod. But she said little to him of Richard or of Eve. Her own feelings were too mixed in the matter to permit of analysis. But she told of the fox in the moonlight. "And the loveliest part of it all was that nothing happened to him. I don't think that I could have stood it to have had him killed. He was so free—and unafraid ——"

The next night Anne in the long front room at Bower's told Peggy and François all about it. François' mother was sewing for Mrs. Bower, and as the distance was great, and she could not go home at night, her small son was sharing with her the hospitality which seemed to him rich and royal in comparison with the economies practised in his own small home.

It was a select company which was gathered in

front of the fire. François and Peggy and Anne and old Mamie, with the white house cat, Josephine, and three kittens in a basket, and Brinsley Tyson smoking his pipe in the background.

"And the old fox went tit-upping and tit-upping along the road in the moonlight, and Dr. Richard and I stood very still, and we saw him ——"

"Last night?"

Anne nodded.

"And what did you do, Miss Anne?"

"We listened and heard the dogs ——"

Little François clasped his hands. "Oh, were the dogs after him?"

"Yes."

"Did they get him?"

"No. He is a wise old fox. He lives up beyond the Crossroads garden. Dr. Brooks thought when they came there to live that he would go away but he hasn't. You see, it is his home. The hunters here all know him, and they are always glad when he gets away."

Brinsley agreed. "There are so few native foxes left in the county that most of us call off the dogs before a killing—we'd soon be without sport if we didn't. An imported fox is a creature in a trap; you want the sly old natives to give you a run for your money."

Little François, dark-eyed and dreamy, delivered an energetic opinion. "I think it is horrid."

Peggy, less sensitive, and of the country, reproved him. "It's gentleman's sport, isn't it, Mr. Brinsley?"

"Yes. To me the dogs and horses are the best part of it. The older I grow the more I hate to kill—that's why I fish. They are cold-blooded creatures."

Peggy, leaning on his knee, demanded a fish story. "The one you told us the last time."

Brinsley's fish story was a poem written by one of the Old Gentlemen, hunting now, it was to be hoped, in happier fields. It was an idyl of the Chesapeake:

> "In the Chesapeake and its tribute streams,
> Where broadening out to the bay they come,
> And the great fresh waters meet the brine,
> There lives a fish that is called the drum."

The drum fish and an old negro, Ned, were the actors in the drama. Ned, fishing one day in his dug-out canoe,

> "Tied his line to his ankle tight,
> To be ready to haul if the fish should bite,
> And seized his fiddle ——"

He played:

> "But slower and slower he drew the bow,
> And soft grew the music sweet and low,
> The lids fell wearily over the eyes,
> The bow arm stopped and the melodies.
> The last strain melted along the deep,
> And Ned, the old fisherman, sank to sleep.
> Just then a huge drum, sent hither by fate,
> Caught a passing glimpse of the tempting bait. . . .

. . . . One terrible jerk of wrath and dread
From the wounded fish as away he sped
With a strength by rage made double —
And into the water went old Ned.
No time for any 'last words' to be said,
For the waves settled placidly over his head,
And his last remark was a bubble."

The children's eyes were wide. Peggy was entranced, but François was not so sure that he liked it. Brinsley's hand dropped on the little lad's shoulder as he told how the two were found

"So looped and tangled together
That their fate was involved in a dark mystery
As to which was the catcher and which the
catchee . . .
And the fishermen thought it could never be
known
After all their thinking and figuring,
Whether the nigger a-fishing had gone,
Or the fish had gone out a-niggering."

There were defects in meter and rhythm, but Brinsley's sprightly delivery made these of minor importance, and the company had no criticism. François, shivering a little, admitted that he wanted to hear it again, and climbed to Brinsley's knee. The old man with his arm about him decided that to say it over would be to spoil the charm, and that anyhow the time had come to pop the corn.

To François this was a new art, but when he had followed the fascinating process through all its stages until the white grains boiled up in the popper and

threatened to burst the cover, his rapture knew no bounds.

"Could I do it myself, Miss Anne?" he asked, and she let him empty the snowy kernels into a big bowl, and fill the popper for a second supply.

She bent above him, showing him how to shake it steadily.

Geoffrey Fox coming in smiled at the scene. How far away it seemed from anything modern—this wide hearth-stone with the dog and the pussy cat—and the little children, the lovely girl and the old man—the wind blowing outside—the corn popping away like little pistols.

"May I have some?" he asked, and Anne smiled up at him, while Peggy brought little plates and set the big bowl on a stool within reach of them all.

"What brings you up, sir?" Geoffrey asked Brinsley.

"The drag-hunt and breakfast at the club. I am too stiff to follow, but David and I like to meet old friends—you see I was born in this country."

That was the beginning of a string of reminiscences to which they all listened breathlessly. The fox hunting instinct was an inheritance in this part of the country. It had its traditions and legends and Brinsley knew them all.

If any one had told Geoffrey Fox a few weeks before that he would be content to spend his time as he was spending it now, writing all day and reading

the chapters at night to a serious-eyed little schoolteacher who scolded him and encouraged him by turns, he would have scoffed at such an impossible prospect. Yet he was not only doing it, but was glad to be swept away from the atmosphere of somewhat sordid Bohemianism with which he had in these later years been surrounded.

And as Brinsley talked, Geoffrey watched Anne. She had Peggy in her arms. Such women were made, he felt, to be not only the mothers of children, but the mothers of the men they loved—made for brooding tenderness—to inspire—to sympathize.

Yet with all her gentleness he knew that Anne was a strong little thing. She would never be a clinging vine; she was rather like a rose high on a trellis—a man must reach up to draw her to him.

As she glanced up, he smiled at her, and she smiled back. Then the smile froze.

Framed in the front doorway stood Eve Chesley! She came straight to Anne and held out her hand. "I made Richard bring me down," she said. "I want to talk to you about the Crossroads ball."

Eve repentant was Eve in her most charming mood. On Sunday morning she had apologized to Richard. "I was horrid, Dicky."

"Last night? You were. I wouldn't have believed it of you, Eve."

"Oh, well, don't be a prig. Do you remember how we used to make up after a quarrel?"

He laughed. "We had to go down on our knees."

She went down on hers, sinking slowly and gracefully to the floor. "Please, I'm sorry."

"Eve, will you ever grow up?"

"I don't want to grow up," wistfully. "Dicky, do you remember that after I had said I was sorry you always bought chocolate drops, and made me eat them all. You were such a good little boy, Richard."

"I was not," hotly.

"Why is it that men don't like to be told that they were good little boys? You are a good little boy now."

"I'm not."

"You are—and you are tied to your mother's apron strings."

"Dicky," she wailed, as he rose in wrath, "I didn't mean that. Honestly. And I'll be good."

Still, with her feet tucked under her, she sat on the floor. "I've been thinking——"

"Yes, Eve."

"You and I have a birthday in March. Why can't we have a big house-warming, and ask all the county families and a lot of people from town?"

"I'm not a millionaire, Eve."

"Neither am I. But there's always Aunt Maude."

She spread out her hands, palms upward. "All I shall have to do is to wheedle her a bit, and she'll

give it to me for a birthday present. Please, Dicky. If you say 'yes' I'll go down to Bower's my very own self and ask Anne Warfield to come to our ball."

He stared at her incredulously. "You'll do *what?*"

"Ask your little—school-teacher. Win scolded me last night, and said that I was a selfish pig. That I couldn't expect to keep you always to myself. But you see I have kept you, Dicky. I have always thought that you and I could go on being—friends, with no one to break in on it."

Her eyes as she raised them to his were shadowed. He spoke heartily. "My dear girl, as if anything could ever come between us." He rose and drew her up from her lowly seat. "I'm glad we talked it out. I confess I was feeling pretty sore over the way you acted, Eve. It wasn't like you."

Eve stuck to her resolution to go to Bower's to seek out and conciliate Anne, and thus it happened that they found her making a Madonna of herself with Peggy in her arms, and Geoffrey Fox's eyes adoring her.

Little François told his mother later that at first he had thought the lovely lady was a fairy princess; for Eve was quite sumptuous in her dinner gown of white and shining satin, with a fur-trimmed wrap of white and silver. She wore, also, a princess air of graciousness, quite different from the half appeal-

ing impertinence of her morning mood when she had knelt at Richard's feet.

Anne, appeased and fascinated by the warmth of Eve's manner, found herself drawn in spite of herself to the charming creature who discussed so frankly her plans for their pleasure.

"Dicky and I were born on the same day," she explained, "and we always have a party together, with two cakes with candles, and this year it is to be at Crossroads."

She invited Brinsley and Geoffrey on the spot, and promised the children a peep into fairy-land. Then having settled the matter to the satisfaction of all concerned, she demanded a fresh popper of corn, insisted on a repetition of Brinsley's fish story, asked about Geoffrey's book, and went away leaving behind her a trail of laughter and light-heartedness.

Later Anne was aware that she had left also a feeling of bewilderment. It seemed incredible that the distance between the mood of last night and of to-night should have been bridged so successfully.

Brushing her hair in front of the mirror, she asked herself, "How much of it was real friendliness?" Uncle Rod had a proverb, "'*A false friend has honey in his mouth, gall in his heart.*'"

She chided herself for her mistrust. One must not inquire too much into motives.

The sight of Richard's bit of pine in the mirror frame shed a gleam of naturalness across the strange-

ness of the hour just spent. It seemed to say, "You and I of the country ——"

Eve was of the town!

The weeks which followed were rare ones. Anne went forth joyous in the morning, and came home joyous at night. She saw Richard daily; now on the road, again in the schoolhouse, less often, but most satisfyingly, by the fire at Bower's.

Geoffrey, noting jealously these evenings that the young doctor spent in the long front room, at last spoke his mind.

"What makes you look like that?" he demanded, as having watched Richard safely out of the way from an upper window, he came down to find Anne gazing dreamily into the coals.

"Like what?"

"Oh, a sort of seventh-heaven look."

"I don't know what you mean."

"You won't admit that you know what I mean."

She rose.

"Sit down. I want to read to you."

"I am afraid I haven't time."

"You had time for Brooks. If you don't let me read to you I shall have to sit all alone—in the dark—my eyes are hurting me."

"Why don't you ask Dr. Brooks about your eyes?"

"Is Dr. Brooks the oracle?"

"He could tell you about your eyes."

"Does he tell you about yours?"

With a scornful glance she left him, but he followed her. "Why shouldn't he tell you about your eyes? They are lovely eyes, Mistress Anne."

"I hate to have you talk like that. It seems to separate me in some way from your friendship, and I thought we were friends."

Her gentleness conquered his mad mood. "Oh, you little saint, you little saint, and I am such a sinner."

So they patched it up, and he read to her the last chapter of his book.

"*And now in the darkness they lay dying, young Franz from Nuremberg, and young George from London, and Michel straight from the vineyards on the coast of France.*"

In the darkness they spoke of their souls. Soon they would go out into the Great Beyond. What then, after death? Franz thought they might go marching on. Young George had a vision of green fields and of hawthorn hedges. But it was young Michel who spoke of the face of God.

Was this the Geoffrey who had teased her on the stairs? This man who wrote words which made one shake and shiver and sob?

"Oh, how do you do it, how do you do it?" The tears were running down her cheeks.

She saw him then as people rarely saw Geoffrey Fox. "God knows," he said, seriously, "but I think that your prayers have helped."

And after she had gone up-stairs he sat long by the fire, alone, with his hand shading his eyes.

The next morning he went to see Richard. The young doctor was in the Garden Room which he used as an office. It was on the ground floor of the big house, with a deer's horns over the fireplace, an ancient desk in one corner, a sideboard against the north wall. In days gone by this room had served many purposes. Here men in hunting pink had gathered for the gay breakfasts which were to fortify them for their sport. On the sideboard mighty roasts had been carved, and hot dishes had steamed. On the round table had been set forth bottles and glasses on Sheffield trays. Men ate much and rode hard. They had left to their descendants a divided heritage of indigestion and of strong sinews, to make of it what they could.

Geoffrey entering asked at once, "Why the Garden Room? There is no garden."

"There was a garden," Richard told him, "but there is a tradition that a pair of lovers eloped over the wall, and the irate father destroyed every flower, every shrub, as if the garden had betrayed him."

"There's a story in that. Did the girl ever come back to find the garden dead?"

"Who knows?" Richard said lightly; "and now, what's the matter with your eyes?"

There was much the matter, and when Richard had made a thorough examination he spoke of a specialist. "Have you ever had trouble with them before?"

"Once, when I was a youngster. I thought I was losing my sight. I used to open my eyes in the dark and think that the curse had come upon me. My grandfather was blind."

"It is rarely inherited, and not in this form. But there might be a predisposition. Anyhow, you'll have to stop work for a time."

"I can't stop work. My book is in the last chapters. And it is a great book. I've never written a great book before. I can talk freely to you, doctor. You know that we artists can't help our egotism. It's a disease that is easily diagnosed."

Richard laughed. "What's the name of your book?"

"'Three Souls.' Anne Warfield gave me the theme."

As he spoke her name it was like a living flame between them. Richard tried to answer naturally. "She ought to be able to write books herself."

Geoffrey shrugged. "She will live her life stories, not write them."

"Why not?"

"Because we men don't let such women live their

own lives. We demand their service and the inspiration of their sympathy. And so we won't let them achieve. We make them light our torches. We are selfish beasts, you know, in the last analysis."

He laughed and rose. "I'll see a specialist. But nobody shall make me stop writing. Not till I have scribbled 'Finis' to my manuscript."

"It isn't well to defy nature."

"Defiance is better than submission. Nature's a cruel jade. You know that. In the end she gets us all. That's why I hate the country. It's there that we see Nature unmasked. I stayed three weeks at a farm last summer, and from morning to night murder went on. A cat killed a cardinal, and a blue jay killed a grosbeak. One of the servants shot a squirrel. And when I walked out one morning to see the sheep, a lamb was gone and we had a roast with mint sauce for dinner. For lunch we had the squirrel in a stew. A hawk swept down upon the chickens, and all that escaped we ate later fried, with cream gravy."

"In most of your instances man was the offender."

"Well, if man didn't kill, something else would. For every lamb there's a wolf."

"You are looking on only one side of it."

"When you can show me the other I'll believe in it. But not to-day when you tell me that my sun may be blotted out."

Something in his voice made the young doctor lay his hand on his shoulder and say quietly: "My dear fellow, don't begin to dread that which may never come. There should be years of light before you. Only you'll have to be careful."

They stood now in the door of the Garden Room. The sun was shining, the snow was melting. There was the acrid smell of box from the hedge beyond.

"I hate caution," said young Geoffrey; "I want to do as I please."

"So does every man," said Richard, "but life teaches him that he can't."

"Oh, Life," scoffed Geoffrey Fox; "life isn't a school. It is a joy ride, with rocks ahead."

CHAPTER IX

In Which Anne, Passing a Shop, Turns In.

ANNE had the Crossroads ball much on her mind. She spoke to Beulah about it.

"I don't know what to wear."

"You'd better go to town with me on Saturday and look for something."

"Perhaps I will. If I had plenty of money it would be easy. Beulah, did you ever see such clothes as Eve Chesley's?"

"If I could spend as much as she does, I'd make more of a show."

"Think of all the tailors and dressmakers and dancing masters and hair-dressers it has taken to make Eve what she is. And yet all the art is hidden."

"I don't think it is hidden. I saw her powder her nose right in front of the men that day she first came. She had a little gold case with a mirror in it, and while Dr. Brooks and Mr. Fox were sitting on the stairs with her, she took it out and looked at herself and rubbed some rouge on her cheeks."

Anne had a vision of the three of them sitting

on the stairs. "Well," she said, in a fierce little fashion, "I don't know what the world is coming to."

Beulah cared little about Eve's world. For the moment Eric filled her horizon, and the dress she was to get to make herself pretty for him.

"Shall we go Saturday?" she asked.

Anne, rummaging in the drawer of her desk, produced a small and shabby pocketbook. She shook the money out and counted it. "With the check that Uncle Rod sent me," she said, "there's enough for a really lovely frock. But I don't know whether I ought to spend it."

"Why not?"

"Everybody ought to save something—I am teaching my children to have penny banks—and yet I go on spending and spending with nothing to show for it."

Beulah was quite placid. "I don't see why you should save. Some day you will get married, and then you won't have to."

"If a woman marries a poor man she ought to be careful of finances. She has to think of her children and of their future."

Beulah shrugged. "What's the use of looking so far ahead? And 'most any husband will see that his wife doesn't get too much to spend."

Before Anne went to bed that night she put a part of her small store of money into a separate compart-

ment of her purse. She would buy a cheaper frock and save herself the afterpangs of extravagance. And the penny banks of the children would no longer accuse her of inconsistency!

The shopping expedition proved a strenuous one. Anne had fixed her mind on certain things which proved to be too expensive. "You go for your fitting," she said to Beulah desperately, as the afternoon waned, "and I will take a last look up Charles Street. We can meet at the train."

The way which she had to travel was a familiar one, but its charm held her—the street lights glimmered pale gold in the early dusk, the crowd swung along in its brisk city manner toward home. Beyond the shops was the Cardinal's house. The Monument topped the hill; to its left the bronze lions guarded the great square; to the right there was the thin spire of the Methodist Church.

She had an hour before train time and she lingered a little, stopping at this window and that, and all the time the money which she had elected to save burned a hole in her pocket.

For there were such things to buy! Passing a flower shop there were violets and roses. Passing a candy shop were chocolates. Passing a hat shop there was a veil flung like a cloud over a celestial *chapeau!* Passing an Everything-that-is-Lovely shop she saw an enchanting length of silk—as pink as a sea-shell—silk like that which Cynthia Warfield had

worn when she sat for the portrait which hung in the library at Crossroads!

Anne did not pass the Lovely Shop; she turned and went in, and bought ten yards of silk with the money that she had meant to spend—and the money she had meant to save!

And she missed the train!

Beulah was waiting for her as she came in breathless. "There isn't another train for two hours," she complained.

Anne sank down on a bench. "I am sorry, Beulah. I didn't know it was so late."

"We'll have to get supper in the station," Beulah said, "and I have spent all my money."

"Oh, and I've spent mine." Anne reflected that if she had not bought the silk she could have paid for Beulah's supper. But she was glad that she had bought it, and that she had it under her arm in a neat package.

She dug into her slim purse and produced a dime. "Never mind, Beulah, we can buy some chocolates."

But they were not destined for such meager fare. Rushing into the station came Geoffrey Fox. As he saw the clock he stopped with the air of a man baffled by fate.

Anne moving toward him across the intervening space saw his face change.

"By all that's wonderful," he said, "how did this happen?"

"We missed our train."

"And I missed mine. Who is 'we'?"

"Beulah is with me."

"Can't you both have dinner with me somewhere? There are two hours of waiting ahead of us."

Anne demurred. "I'm not very hungry."

But Beulah, who had joined them, was hungry, and she said so, frankly. "I am starved. If I could have just a sandwich ——"

"You shall have more than that. We'll have a feast and a frolic. Let me check your parcels, Mistress Anne."

Back they went to the golden-lighted streets and turning down toward the city they reached at last the big hotel which has usurped the place of the stately and substantial edifices which were once the abodes of ancient and honorable families.

Within were soft lights and the sound of music. The rugs were thick, and there was much marble. As they entered the dining-room, they seemed to move through a golden haze. It was early, and most of the tables were empty.

Beulah was rapturous. "I have always wanted to come here. It is perfectly lovely."

The attentive waiter at Geoffrey's elbow was being told to bring—— Anne's quick ear caught the word.

"No, please," she said at once, "not for Beulah and me."

His keen glance commanded her. "Of course not," he said, easily. Presently he had the whole matter of the menu settled, and could talk to Anne. She was enjoying it all immensely and said so.

"I should like to do this sort of thing every day."

"Heaven forbid. You would lose your dreams, and grow self-satisfied—and fat—like that woman over there."

Anne shuddered. "It isn't that she is fat—it's her eyes, and the way she makes up."

"That is the way they get when they live in places like this. If you want to be slender and lovely and keep your dreams you must teach school."

"Oh, but there's drudgery in that."

"It is the people who drudge who dream. They don't know it, but they do. People who have all they want learn that there is nothing more for life to give. And they drink and take drugs to bring back the illusions they have lost."

They fell into silence after that, and then it was Beulah who became voluble. Her fair round face beamed. It was a common little face, but it was good and honest. Beulah was having the time of her life. She did not know that she owed her good fortune to Anne, that if Anne had not been there, Geoffrey would not have asked her to dine. But if she had known it, she would not have cared.

"What train did you come in on?" she asked.

"At noon. Brooks thought I ought to see a specialist. He doesn't give me much encouragement about my eyes. He wants me to stop writing, but I shan't until I get through with my book."

He spoke recklessly, but Anne saw the shadow on his face. "You aren't telling us how really serious it is," she said, as Beulah's attention was diverted.

"It is so serious that for the first time in my life I know myself to be—a coward. Last night I lay in bed with my eyes shut to see how it would seem to be blind. It was a pretty morbid thing to do—and this morning finished me."

She tried to speak her sympathy, but could not. Her eyes were full of tears.

"Don't," he said, softly, "my good little friend—my good little friend."

She dabbed her eyes with her handkerchief. The unconscious Beulah, busy with her oysters, asked: "Is the Tobasco too hot? I'm all burning up with it."

Geoffrey was able later to speak lightly of his affliction. "I shall go to the Brooks ball as a Blind Beggar."

"Oh, how can you make fun of it?"

"It is better to laugh than to cry. But your tears were—a benediction."

Silence fell between them, and after a while he asked, "What shall you wear?"

"To the ball? Pink silk. A heavenly pink. I

have just bought it, and I paid more than I should for it."

"Such extravagance!"

"I'm to be Cynthia Warfield—like the portrait in the Crossroads library of my grandmother. It came to me when I saw the silk in the shop window. I shall have to do without the pearls, but I have the lace flounces. They were left to my mother."

"And so Cinderella will go to the ball, and dance with the Prince. Is Brooks the Prince?"

She flushed, and evaded. "I can't dance Not the new dances."

"I can teach you if you'll let me."

"Really?"

"Yes. But you must pay. You must give the Blind Beggar the first dance and as many more as he demands."

"But I can't dance all of them with you."

"You can dance some of them. And that's my price."

To promise him dances seemed to her quite delicious and delightful since she could not dance at all. But he made a little contract and had her sign it, and put it in his pocket.

Going home Anne had little to say. It was Geoffrey who talked, while Beulah slept in a seat by herself.

Anne made her own lovely gown, running over now and then to take surreptitious peeps at Cynthia's

portrait. She had let Mrs. Brooks into her secret, and the little lady was enthusiastic.

"You shall wear my pearls, my dear. They will be very effective in your dark hair."

She brought the jewels down in an old blue velvet box—milk-white against a yellowed satin lining.

"My father gave them to me on my wedding day. Some day I shall give them to Richard's wife."

She could not know how her words stirred the heart of the girl who stood looking so quietly down at the pearls.

"I am almost afraid to wear them," Anne said breathlessly. She gave Nancy a shy little kiss. "You were *dear* to think of it."

And now busy days were upon her. There was the school with Richard running in after closing time, and staying, too, and keeping her from the work that was waiting at home. Then at twilight a dancing lesson with Geoffrey in the long front room, with Beulah playing audience and sometimes Eric, and with Peggy capering madly to the music.

Then the evening, with its enchanting task of stitching on yards of rosy silk. Usually Geoffrey read to her while she worked. His story was nearing the end. He was wearing heavy goggles which gave him an owl-like appearance, of which he complained.

"It spoils my beauty, Mistress Anne. I am just an ugly gnome who sits at the feet of the Princess."

"You are not ugly, and you know it. And men shouldn't be vain."

"We are worse than women. Do you know what you look like with all that silk around you?"

"No."

"Like Aurora. Do you remember that Stevenson speaks of a 'pink dawn'? Well, you are a pink dawn."

"Please stop talking about me, and read your last chapter. I am so glad that you have reached the end."

"Because you are tired of hearing it?"

"Because of your poor eyes."

He took off his goggles. "Do my eyes look different? Are they changed or—dim?"

"They are as bright as stars," and he sighed with relief.

"*And now it was young Michel who whispered, 'God is good! In a moment we shall see his face, and we shall say to him, "We fought, but there is no hatred in our hearts. We cannot hate—our brothers ——"'*"

That was the end.

"It is a great book," Anne told him solemnly. "It will be a great success."

He seemed to shrink and grow small in his chair. "It will come—too late."

She looked up and saw the mood that was upon

him. "Oh, you must not—not that," she said, hurriedly; "if you give up now it will be a losing fight."

"Don't you suppose that I would fight if I felt that I could win? But what can a man do with a thing like this that is dragging him down to darkness?"

"You mustn't be discouraged. Dr. Brooks says that it isn't—inevitable. You know that he said that, and that the specialist said it."

"I know. But something tells me that I am facing—darkness." He threw up his head. "Why should we talk of it? Let me tell you rather how much you have helped me with my book. If it had not been for you I could not have written it."

"I am glad if I have been of service." Her words sounded formal after the warmth of his own.

He laughed, with a touch of bitterness. "The Princess serves," he said, "always and always serves. She never grabs, as the rest of us do, at happiness."

"I shall grab when it comes," she said, smiling a little, "and I am happy now, because I am going to wear my pretty gown."

"Which reminds me," he said, quickly, and brought from his pocket a little box. "Your costume won't be complete without these. I bought them for you with the advance check which my publishers sent after they had read the first chapters of my book."

She opened the box. Within lay a little string of pearls. Not such pearls as Nancy had shown her, but milk-white none the less, with shining lovely lights.

"Oh," she gave a distressed cry, "you shouldn't have done it."

"Why not?"

"I can't accept them. Indeed I can't."

"I shall feel as if you had flung them in my face if you give them back to me," heatedly.

"You shouldn't take it that way. It isn't fair to take it that way."

"It isn't a question of fairness. It is a question of kindness on your part."

"I want to be kind."

"Then take them."

She thought for a moment with her eyes on the fire. When she raised them it was to say, "Would you—want your little sister, Mimi, to take jewels from any man?"

"Yes. If he loved her as I love you."

It was out, and they stood aghast. Then Geoffrey stammered, "Can't you see that my soul kneels at your feet? That to me these pearls aren't as white as your—whiteness?"

The rosy silk had slipped to the floor. She was like a very small goddess in a morning cloud. "I can't take them. Oh, I can't."

He made a quick gesture. But for her restrain-

ing hand he would have cast the pearls into the flames.

"Oh, don't," she said, the little hand tense on his arm. "Don't—hurt me—like that."

He dropped the pearls into his pocket. "If you won't wear them nobody shall. I suppose I seem to you like all sorts of a fool. I seem like all sorts of a fool to myself."

He turned and left her

An hour later he came back and found her still sewing on the rosy silk. Her eyes were red, as if she had wept a little.

"I was a brute," he said, repentantly; "forgive me and smile. I am a tempestuous fellow, and I forgot myself."

"I was afraid we weren't ever going to be friends again."

"I shall always be your friend. Yet—who wants a Blind Beggar for a friend—tell me that, Mistress Anne?"

CHAPTER X

In Which a Blind Beggar and a Butterfly Go to a Ball.

In my Own Little Room.

UNCLE ROD, I went to the party!

I came home an hour ago, and since then I have been sitting all shivery and shaky in my pink silk. It will be daylight in a few minutes, but I shan't go to bed. I couldn't sleep if I did. I feel as if I shouldn't ever sleep again.

Uncle Rod, Jimmie Ford was at the Crossroads ball!

I went early, because Mrs. Nancy had asked me to be there to help with her guests. Geoffrey Fox went with me. He was very picturesque in a ragged jerkin with a black bandage over his eyes and with old Mamie leading him at the end of a cord. She enjoyed it immensely, and they attracted a lot of attention, as he went tap-tapping along with his cane over the polished floor, or whined for alms, while she sat up on her haunches with a tin cup in her mouth.

Well, Dr. Richard met us at the door, looking the young squire to perfection in his grandfather's old dress coat of blue with brass buttons. The people

from New York hadn't come, so Mrs. Nancy put the pearls in my hair, and they made me stand under the portrait in the library, to see if I were really like my grandmother. I can't believe that I looked as lovely as she, but they said I did, and I began to feel as happy and excited as Cinderella at her ball.

Then the New York crowd arrived in motors, and they were all masked. I knew Eve Chesley at once and Winifred Ames, but it was hard to be sure of any one else. Eve Chesley was a Rose, with a thousand fluttering flounces of pink chiffon. She was pursued by two men dressed as Butterflies, slim and shining in close caps with great silken wings—a Blue Butterfly and a Brown one. I was pretty sure that the Brown one was Philip Meade. It was quite wonderful to watch them with their wings waving. Eve carried a pocketful of rose petals and threw them into the air as she went. I had never imagined anything so lovely.

Well, I danced with Dr. Richard and I danced with Geoffrey Fox, and I danced with Dutton Ames, and with some men that I had never met before. It seemed so *good* to be doing things like the rest. Then all at once I began to feel that the Blue Butterfly was watching me. He drifted away from his pursuit of Evelyn Chesley, and whenever I raised my eyes, I could see him in corners staring at me.

It gave me a queer feeling. I couldn't be sure, and yet—there he was. And, Uncle Rod, suddenly

I knew him! Something in the way he carried himself. You know Jimmie's little swagger!

I think I lost my head after that. I flirted with Dr. Richard and with Geoffrey Fox. I think I even flirted a little with Dutton Ames. I wanted them to be nice to me. I wanted Jimmie to see that what he had scorned other men could value. I wanted him to know that I had forgotten him. I laughed and danced as if my heart was as light as my heels, and all the while I was just sick and faint with the thought of it—"Jimmie Ford is here, and he hasn't said a word to me. Jimmie Ford is here—and—he hasn't said a word ——"

At last I couldn't stand it any longer, and when I was dancing with Geoffrey Fox I said, "Do you think we could go down to the Garden Room? I must get away."

He didn't ask any question. And presently we were down there in the quiet, and he had his bandage off, and was looking at me, anxiously. "What has happened, Mistress Anne?"

And then, oh, Uncle Rod, I told him. I don't know how I came to do it, but it seemed to me that he would understand, and he did.

When I had finished his face was white and set. "Do you mean to tell me that any man has tried to break your heart?"

I think I was crying a little. "Yes. But the worst of all is my—pride."

"My little Princess," he said softly, "that this should have come—to you."

Uncle Rod, I think that if I had ever had a brother, I should have wanted him to be like Geoffrey Fox. All his lightness and frivolity seemed to slip from him. "He has thrown away what I would give my life for," he said. "Oh, the young fool, not to know that Paradise was being handed to him on a platter."

I didn't tell him Jimmie's name. That is not to be spoken to any one but you. And of course he could not know, though perhaps he guessed it, after what happened later.

While we sat there, Dr. Richard came to hunt for us. "Everybody is going in to supper," he said. He seemed surprised to find us there together, and there was a sort of stiffness in his manner. "Mother has been asking for you."

We went at once to the dining-room. There were long tables set in the old-fashioned way for everybody. Mrs. Nancy wanted things to be as they had been in her own girlhood. On the table in the wide window were two birthday cakes, and at that table Dr. Richard sat with his mother on one side of him, and Eve Chesley on the other. Eve's cake had pink candles and his had white, and there were twenty-five candles on each cake.

Geoffrey Fox and I sat directly opposite; Dutton Ames was on my right, Mrs. Ames was on Geoffrey's

left, and straight across the table, with his mask off, was Jimmie Ford, staring at me with all his eyes!

For a minute I didn't know what to do. I just sat and stared, and then suddenly I picked up the glass that stood by my plate, raised it in salute and drank smiling. His face cleared, he hesitated just a fraction of a second, then his glass went up, and he returned my greeting. I wonder if he thought that I would cut him dead, Uncle Rod?

And don't worry about *what* I drank. It was white grape juice. Mrs. Nancy won't have anything stronger.

Well, after that I ate, and didn't know what I ate, for everything seemed as dry as dust. I know my cheeks were red and that my eyes shone, and I smiled until my face ached. And all the while I watched Jimmie and Jimmie watched me, and pretty soon, Uncle Rod, I understood why Jimmie was there.

He was making love to Eve Chesley!

Making love is very different from being in love, isn't it? Perhaps love is something that Jimmie really doesn't understand. But he was using on Eve all of the charming tricks that he had tried on me. She is more sophisticated, and they mean less to her than to me, but I could see him bending toward her in that flattering worshipful way of his —and when he took one of her roses and touched it to his lips and then to her cheek, everything was

dark for a minute. That kind of kiss was the only kind that Jimmie Ford ever gave me, but to me it had meant that he—cared—and that I cared—and here he was doing it before the eyes of all the world —and for love of another woman!

After supper he came around the table and spoke to me. I suppose he thought he had to. I don't know what he said and I don't care. I only know that I wanted to get away. I think it was then that Geoffrey Fox guessed. For when Jimmie had gone he said, very gently, "Would you like to go home? You look like your own little ghost, Mistress Anne."

But I had promised one more dance to Dr. Richard, and I wanted to dance it. If you could have seen at the table how he towered above Jimmie Ford. And when he stood up to make a little speech in response to a toast from Dutton Ames, his voice rang out in such a—man's way. Do you remember Jimmie Ford's falsetto?

I had my dance with him, and then Geoffrey took me home, and all the way I kept remembering the things Dr. Richard had said to me, such pleasant friendly things, and when his mother told me "good-night" she took my face between her hands and kissed me. "You must come often, little Cynthia Warfield," she said. "Richard and I both want you."

But now that I am at home again, I can't think of anything but how Jimmie Ford has spoiled it all.

When you have given something, you can't ever really take it back, can you? When you've given faith and constancy to one man, what have you left to give another?

The river is beginning to show like a silver streak, and a rooster is crowing. Oh, Uncle Rod, if you were only here. Write and tell me that you love me.

Your

LITTLE GIRL.

In the Telegraph Tower.

MY VERY DEAR:

It is after supper, and Beulah and I are out here with Eric. He likes to have her come, and I play propriety, for Mrs. Bower, in common with most women of her class, is very careful of her daughter. I know you don't like that word "class," but please don't think I am using it snobbishly. Indeed, I think Beulah is much better brought up than the daughters of folk who think themselves much finer, and Mrs. Bower in her simple way is doing some very effective chaperoning.

Eric is on night duty in the telegraph tower this week; the other operator has the day work. The evenings are long, so Beulah brings her sewing, and keeps Eric company. They really don't have much to say to each other, so that I am not interrupted when I write. They seem to like to sit and

look out on the river and the stars and the moon coming up behind the hills.

It is all settled now. Eric told me yesterday. "I am very happy," he said; "I have been a lonely man."

They are to be married in June, and the things that she is making are to go into the cedar chest which her father has given her. He found it one day when he was in Baltimore, and when he showed it to her, he shone with pleasure. He's a good old Peter, and he is so glad that Beulah is to marry Eric. Eric will rent a little house not far up the road. It is a dear of a cottage, and Peggy and I call it the Playhouse. We sit on the porch when we come home from school, and peep in at the windows and plan what we would put into it if we had the furnishing of it. I should like a house like that, Uncle Rod, for you and me and Diogenes. We'd live happy ever after, wouldn't we? Some day the world is going to build "teacherages" just as it now builds parsonages, and the little houses will help to dignify and uplift the profession.

Your dear letter came just in time, and it was just right. I should have gone to pieces if you had pitied me, for I was pitying myself dreadfully. But when I read "Little School-teacher, what would you tell your scholars?" I knew what you wanted me to answer. I carried your letter in my pocket to school, and when I rang the bell I kept saying over and

over to myself, "Life is what we make it. Life is what we make it," and all at once the bells began to ring it:

"Life is—what we—make it—
Life is—what we—make it."

When the children came in, before we began the day's work, I talked to them. I find it is always uplifting when we have failed in anything to try to tell others how not to fail! Perhaps it isn't preaching what we practice, but at least it supplies a working theory.

I made up a fairy-story for them, too, about a Princess who was so ill and unhappy that all the kingdom was searched far and wide for some one to cure her. And at last an old crone was found who swore that she had the right remedy. "What is it?" all the wise men asked; but the old woman said, "It is written in this scroll. To-morrow the Princess must start out alone upon a journey. Whatever difficulty she encounters she must open this scroll and read, and the scroll will tell her what to do."

Well, the Princess started out, and when she had traveled a little way she found that she was hungry and tired, and she cried: "Oh, I haven't anything to eat." Then the scroll said, "Read me," and she opened the scroll and read: "There is corn in the fields. You must shell it and grind it on a stone

and mix it with water, and bake it into the best bread that you can." So the Princess shelled the corn and ground it and mixed it with water, and baked it, and it tasted as sweet as honey and as crisp as apples. And the Princess ate with an appetite, and then she lay down to rest. And in the night a storm came up and there was no shelter, and the Princess cried out, "Oh, what shall I do?" and the scroll said, "Read me." So she opened the scroll and read: "There is wood on the ground. You must gather it and stack it and build the best little house that you can." So the Princess worked all that day and the next and the next, and when the hut was finished it was strong and dry and no storms could destroy it. So the Princess stayed there in the little hut that she had made, and ate the sweet loaves that she had baked, and one day a great black bear came down the road, and the Princess cried out, "Oh, I have no weapon; what shall I do?" And the scroll said, "Read me." So she opened the scroll and read, "Walk straight up to the bear, and make the best fight that you can." So the Princess, trembling, walked straight up to the big black bear, and behold! when he saw her coming, he ran away!

Now the year was up, and the king sent his wise men to bring the Princess home, and one day they came to her little hut and carried her back to the palace, and she was so rosy and well that everybody

wondered. Then the king called the people together, and said, "Oh, Princess, speak to us, and let us know how you were cured." So the Princess told them of how she had baked the bread, and built the hut, and conquered the bear; and of how she had found health and happiness. For the bread that you make with your own hands is the sweetest, and the shelter that you build for yourself is the snuggest, and the fear that you face is no fear at all.

The children liked my story, and I felt very brave when I had finished it. You see, I have been forgetting our sunsets, and I have been shivery and shaky when I should have faced my Big Black Bear!

Beulah is ready to go—and so—good-night. The moon is high up and round, and as pure gold as your own loving heart.

Ever your own

ANNE.

CHAPTER XI

In Which Brinsley Speaks of the Way to Win a Woman.

AND now spring was coming to the countryside. The snow melted, and the soft rains fell, and on sunny days Diogenes, splashing in the little puddles, picked and pulled at his feathers as he preened himself in the shelter of the south bank which overlooked the river.

Some of the feathers were tipped with shining green and some with brown. Some of them fell by the way, some floated out on blue tides, and one of them was wafted by the wind to the feet of Geoffrey Fox, as, on a certain morning, he, too, stood on the south bank.

He picked it up and stuck it in his hat. "I'll wear it for my lady," he said to the old drake, "and much good may it do me!"

The old drake lifted his head toward the sky, and gave a long cry. But it was not for Anne that he called. She still gave him food and drink. He still met her at the gate. If her mind was less upon him than in the past, it mattered little. The things that held meaning for him this morning were the glory of the sunshine, and the softness of the breeze

Stirring within him was a need above and beyond anything that Geoffrey could give, or Anne. He listened not for the step of the little school-teacher, but for the whirring wings of some comrade of his own kind. Again and again he sent forth his cry to the empty air.

Geoffrey's heart echoed the cry. His book was finished, and it was time for him to go. Yet he was held by a tie stronger than any which had hitherto bound him. Here in the big old house at Bower's was the one thing that his heart wanted.

"I could make her happy," he whispered to that inner self which warned him. "With her as my wife and with my book a success, I could defy fate."

The day was Saturday, and all the eager old fishermen had arrived the night before. Brinsley Tyson coming out with his rod in his hand and a broad-brimmed hat on his head invited Geoffrey to join him. "I've a motor boat that will take us out to the island after we have done a morning's fishing, and Mrs. Bower has put up a lunch."

"The glare is bad for my eyes."

"Been working them too hard?"

"Yes."

"There's an awning and smoked glasses if you'll wear them. And I don't want to go alone. David went back on me; he's got a new book. It's a puzzle to me why any man should want to read when he can have a day's fishing."

"If people didn't read what would become of my books?"

"Let 'em read. But not on days like this." Brinsley's fat face was upturned to the sun. With a vine-wreath instead of his broad hat and tunic in place of his khaki he might have posed for any of the plump old gods who loved the good things of life.

Geoffrey, because he had nothing else to do, went with him. Anne was invisible. On Saturday mornings she did all of the things she had left undone during the week. She mended and sewed and washed her brushes, and washed her hair, and gave all of her little belongings a special rub and scrub, and showed herself altogether exquisite and housewifely.

She saw Geoffrey start out, and she waved to him. He waved back, his hand shading his eyes. When he had gone, she cleaned all of her toilet silver, and ran ribbons into nicely embroidered nainsook things, and put her pillows in the sun and tied up her head and swept and dusted, and when she had made everything shining, she had a bit of lunch on a tray, and then she washed her hair.

Geoffrey ate lunch on the island with Brinsley Tyson. He liked the old man immensely. There was a flavor about his worldliness which had nothing to do with stale frivolities; it was rather a thing of fastidious taste and of tempered wit. He was keen

in his judgments of men, and charitable in his estimates of women.

Brinsley Tyson had known Baltimore before the days of modern cities. He had known it before it had cut its hotels after the palace pattern, and when Rennert's in more primitive quarters had been the Mecca for epicureans. He had known its theaters when the footlight favorites were Lotta and Jo Emmet, and when the incomparable Booth and Jefferson had held audiences spellbound at Ford's and at Albaugh's. He had known Charles Street before it was extended, and he had known its Sunday parade. He had known the Bay Line Boats, the harbor and the noisy streets that led to the wharves. He had known Lexington Market on Saturday afternoons; the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad in the heyday of its importance, and more than all he had known the beauties and belles of old Baltimore, and it added piquancy to many of his anecdotes when he spoke of his single estate as a tragedy resulting from his devotion to too many charmers, with no possibility of making a choice.

It was of these things that he spoke while Geoffrey, lying in the grass with his arm across his eyes, listened and enjoyed.

"And you never married, sir?"

"I've told you there were too many of them. If I could have had any one of those girls on this island with 'tother dear charmers away, there wouldn't

have been any trouble. But a choice with them all about me was—impossible." His old eyes twinkled.

"Suppose you had made a choice, and she hadn't cared for you?" said the voice of the man on the grass.

"Any woman will care if you go at it the right way."

"What is the right way?"

"There's only one way to win a woman. If she says she won't marry you, carry her off by force to a clergyman, and when you get her there make her say 'Yes.'"

Geoffrey sat up. "You don't mean that literally?"

Brinsley nodded. "Indeed I do. Take the attitude with them of Man the Conqueror. They all like it. Man the Suppliant never gets what he wants."

"But in these days primitive methods aren't possible."

Brinsley skipped a chicken bone expertly across the surface of the water. "Primitive methods are always possible. The trouble is that man has lost his nerve. The cult of chivalry has spoiled him. It has taught him to kneel at his lady's feet, where pre-historically he kept his foot on her neck!"

Geoffrey laughed. "You'd be mobbed in a suffrage meeting."

"Suffrage, my dear fellow, is the green carnation in the garden of femininity. Every woman blooms

for her lover. It is the lack of lovers that produces the artificial—hence votes for women. What does the woman being carried off under the arm of conquering man care for yellow banners or speeches from the tops of busses? She is too busy trying to please him."

"It would be a great experiment. I'd like to try it."

Brinsley, uncorking a hot and cold bottle, boldly surmised, "It is the little school-teacher?"

Geoffrey, again flat on the grass, murmured, "Yes."

"And it is neck and neck between you and that young cousin of mine?"

"I am afraid he is a neck ahead."

"It all depends upon which runs away with her first."

Again Geoffrey murmured, "I'd like to try it."

"Why not?" said Brinsley and beamed over his coffee cup like a benevolent spider at an unsuspecting fly. He had no idea that his fooling might be taken seriously. It was not given to his cynicism to comprehend the mood of the seemingly composed young person who lay on the grass with his hat over his eyes—torn by contending emotions, maddened by despair and the dread of darkness, awakened to new impulses in which youth and hot blood fought against an almost reverent tenderness for the object of his adoration. Since the night of the Crossroads

ball Geoffrey had permitted himself to hope. She had turned to him then. For the first time he had felt that the barriers were down between them.

"Now Richard," Brinsley was saying, as he smoked luxuriously after the feast, "ought to marry Eve. She'll get her Aunt Maude's money, and be the making of him."

Richard, who at that very moment was riding through the country on his old white horse, had no thought of Eve.

The rhythm of old Ben's even trot formed an accompaniment to the song that his heart was singing—

> "I think she was the most beautiful lady,
> That ever was in the West Country ——"

As he passed along the road, he was aware of the world's awakening. His ears caught the faint flat bleating of lambs, the call of the cocks, the high note of the hens, the squeal of little pigs, and above all, the clamor of blackbirds and of marauding crows.

The trees, too, were beginning to show the pale tints of spring, and an amethyst haze enveloped the hills. The river was silver in the shadow and gold in the sun; the little streams that ran down to it seemed to sing as they went.

Coming at last to an old white farmhouse, Richard dismounted and went in. The old man bent with rheumatism welcomed him, and the old wife said,

"He is always better when he knows that you are coming, doctor."

The old man nodded. "Your gran'dad used to come. I was a little boy an' croupy, and he seemed big as a house when he came in at the door. He was taller than you, and thin."

"Now, father," the old woman protested, "the young doctor ain't fat."

"He's fatter'n his gran'dad. But I ain't saying that I don't like it. I like meat on a man's bones."

Richard laughed. "Just so that I don't go the way of Cousin Brin. You know Brinsley Tyson, don't you?"

"He's the fat twin. Yes, I know him and David. David comes and reads to me, but Brinsley went to Baltimore, and now he don't seem to remember that we were boys together, and went to the Crossroads school."

After that they spoke of the little new teacher, and Richard revelled in the praise they gave her. She was worshipped, they said, by the people round-about. There had never been another like her.

> *"I think she was the most beautiful lady,*
> *That ever was in the West Country ——"*

was Richard's enlargement of their theme. In the weeks just past he had seen much of her, and it had seemed to him that life began and ended with his thought of her.

When he rose to go the old woman went to the door with him. "I guess we owe you a lot by this time," she remarked; "you've made so many calls. It cheers him up to have you, but you'd better stop now that he don't need you. It's so far, and we ain't good pay like some of them."

Richard squared his shoulders—a characteristic gesture. "Don't bother about the bill. I have a sort of sentiment about my grandfather's old patients. It is a pleasure to know them and serve them."

"If you didn't mind taking your pay in chickens," she stated as he mounted his horse, "we could let you have some broilers."

"You will need all you can raise." Then as his eyes swept the green hill which sloped down to the river, he perceived an orderly line of waddling fowls making their way toward the house.

"I'd like a white duck," he said, "if you could let me take her now."

He chose a meek and gentle creature who submitted to the separation from the rest of her kind without rebellion. Tucked under Richard's arm, she surveyed the world with some alarm, but presently, as he rode on with her, she seemed to acquiesce in her abduction and faced the adventure with serene eyes, murmuring now and then some note of demure interrogation as she nestled quite confidently against the big man who rode so easily his great white horse.

And thus they came to Bower's, to find Anne on the south bank, like a very modern siren, drying her hair, with Diogenes nipping the new young grass near her.

She saw them coming. Richard wore a short rough coat and an old alpine hat of green. His leggings were splashed with mud, and the white horse was splashed, but there was about the pair of them an air of gallant achievement.

She rose to greet them. She was blushing a little and with her dark hair blowing she was "the most beautiful," like the lady in the song.

"I thought no one would be coming," was her apology, "and out here I get the wind and sun."

"All the old fishermen will be wrecked on the rocks if they get a glimpse of you," he told her gravely; "you mustn't turn their poor old heads."

And now the white duck murmured.

"The lovely dear, where did you get her?" Anne asked.

"In the hills, to cheer up Diogenes."

He set the white duck down. She shook her feathers and again spoke interrogatively. And now Diogenes lifted his head and answered. For a few moments he rent the air with his song of triumph. Then he turned and led the way to the river. There was a quiet pool in the bend of the bank. The old drake breasted its shining waters, and presently the white duck followed. With a sort of restrained

coquetry she turned her head from side to side. All her questions were answered, all her murmurs stilled.

Richard and Anne smiled at each other. "What made you think of it?" she asked.

"I thought you'd like it."

"I do." She began to twist up her hair.

"Please don't. I like to see it down."

"But people will be coming in."

"Why should we be here when they come? I'll put Ben in the stable—and we'll go for a walk. Do you know there are violets in the wood?"

From under the red-striped awning of Brinsley's boat Geoffrey Fox saw Anne's hair blowing like a sable banner in the breeze. He saw Richard's square figure peaked up to the alpine hat. He saw them enter the wood.

He shut his eyes from the glare of the sun and lay quietly on the cushions of the little launch. But though his eyes were shut, he could still see those two figures walking together in the dreamy dimness of the spring forest.

"What were the ethics of the primitive man?" he asked Brinsley suddenly. "Did he run away with a woman who belonged to somebody else?"

"Why not?" Brinsley's reel was whirring. "And now if you don't mind, Fox, you might be ready with the net. If this fish is as big as he pulls, he will weigh a ton."

Geoffrey, coming in, found Peggy disconsolate on the pier.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

"I can't find Anne. She said that after her hair dried she'd go for a walk to Beulah's playhouse, and we were to have tea. Beulah was to bring it."

"She has gone for a walk with some one else."

"Who?"

"Dr. Brooks. Let's go and look for her, Peggy, and when we find her we will tell her what we think of her for running away."

The green stillness of the grove was very grateful after the glare of the river. Geoffrey walked quickly, with the child's hand in his. He had a feeling that if he did not walk quickly he would be too late.

He was not too late; he saw that at a glance. Richard had dallied in his wooing. It had been so wonderful to be with her. Once when he had knelt beside her to pick violets, the wind had blown across his face a soft sweet strand of her hair. It was then that she had braided it, sitting on a fallen log under a blossoming dogwood.

"It is so long," she had said with a touch of pride, "that it is a great trouble to care for it. Cynthia Warfield had hair like mine."

"I don't believe that any one ever had hair like yours. It seems to me as if every strand must have been made specially in some celestial shop, and then the pattern destroyed."

How lovely she was when she blushed like that! How little and lovely and wise and good. He liked little women. His mother was small, and he was glad that both she and Anne had delicate hands and feet. He was aware that this preference was old-fashioned, but it was, none the less, the way he felt about it.

And now there broke upon the silence of the wood the sound of murmuring voices. Peggy and Geoffrey Fox had invaded their Paradise!

"We thought," Peggy complained, "that we had lost you. Anne, you promised about the tea."

"Oh, Peggy, I forgot."

"Beulah's gone with the basket and Eric, and we can't be late because there are hot biscuits."

Hurrying toward the biscuits and their hotness, Anne ran ahead with Peggy.

"How about the eyes?" Richard asked as he and Geoffrey followed.

"I've been on the water, and it is bad for them. But I'm not going to worry. I am getting out of life more than I hoped—more than I dared hope."

His voice had a high note of excitement. Richard glanced at him. For a moment he wondered if Fox had been drinking.

But Geoffrey was intoxicated with the wine of his dreams. With a quick gesture in which he seemed to throw from him all the fears which had oppressed him, he told his triumphant lie.

"I am going to marry Anne Warfield; she has promised to be eyes for me, and light—the sun and the moon."

Richard's face grew gray. He spoke with difficulty. "She has promised?"

Then again Geoffrey lied, meaning indeed before the night had passed to make his words come true. "She is going to marry me—and I am the happiest man alive!"

The light went out of Richard's world. How blind he had been. He had taken her smiles and blushes to himself when she had glowed with a happiness which had nothing to do with him.

He steadied himself to speak. "You are a lucky fellow, Fox; you must let me congratulate you."

"The world doesn't know," Geoffrey said, "not yet. But I had to tell it to some one, and a doctor is a sort of secular father confessor."

Richard's laugh was without mirth. "If you mean that it's not to be told, you may rely on my discretion."

"Of course. I told you she was to play Beatrice to my Dante, but she shall be more than that."

It was a rather silent party which had tea on the porch of the Playhouse. But Beulah and Eric were not aware of any lack in their guests. Eric had been to Baltimore the day before, and Beulah wore her new ring. She accepted Richard's congratulations shyly.

"I like my little new house," she said; "have you been over it?"

He said that he had not, and she took him. Eric went with them, and as they stood in the door of an upper room, he put his arm quite frankly about Beulah's shoulders as she explained their plans to Richard. "This is to be in pink and the other one in white, and all the furniture is to be pink and white."

She was as pink and white and pretty as the rooms she was planning, and to see her standing there within the circle of her lover's arm was heart-warming.

"You must get some roses from my mother, Beulah, for your little garden," the young doctor told her; "all pink and white like the rest of it."

He let them go down ahead of him, and so it happened that he stood for a moment alone in a little upper porch at the back of the house which overlooked the wood. The shadows were gathering in its dim aisles, shutting out the daylight, shutting out the dreams which he had lost that day in the fragrant depths.

When later he came with the rest of them to Bower's, the river was stained with the sunset. Diogenes and the white duck breasted serenely the crimson surface. Certain old fishermen trailed belatedly up the bank. Others sat spick and span and ready for supper on the porch.

Brinsley Tyson over the top of his newspaper hailed Richard.

"There's a telephone call for you. They've been trying to get you for an hour."

He went in at once, and coming out told Anne good-night. "Thank you for a happy afternoon," he said.

But she missed something in his voice, something that had been there when they had walked in the wood.

She watched him as he went away, square-shouldered and strong on his big white horse. She had a troubled sense that things had in some fateful and tragic way gone wrong with her afternoon, but it was not yet given to her to know that young Richard on his big white horse was riding out of her life.

It was after supper that Geoffrey asked her to go out on the river with him.

"Not to-night. I'm tired."

"Just a little minute, Mistress Anne. To see the moon come up over the island. Please." So she consented.

Helping her into the boat, Geoffrey's hands were shaking. The boat swept out from the pier in a wide curve, and he drew a long breath. He had her now—it would be a great adventure—like a book—better than any book.

Primitive man in prehistoric days carried his woman off captive under his arm. Geoffrey, pursu-

ing modern methods, had borrowed Brinsley's boat. A rug was folded innocently on the cushions; in a snug little cupboard under the stern seat were certain supplies—a great adventure, surely!

And now the boat was under the bridge; the signal lights showed red and green. Then as they slipped around the first island there was only the silver of the moonshine spread out over the waters.

Geoffrey stopped the motor. "We'll drift and talk."

"You talk," she told him, "and I'll listen, and we mustn't be too late."

"What is too late?"

"I told you I would stay just a little minute."

"There is no real reason why we shouldn't stay as long as we wish. You are surely not so prim that you are doing it for propriety."

"You know I am not prim."

"Yes you are. You are prim and Puritan and sometimes you are a prig. But I like you that way, Mistress Anne. Only to-night I shall do as I please."

"Don't be silly."

"Is it silly to love you—why?"

He argued it with her brilliantly—so that it was only when the red and green lights of a second bridge showed ahead of them that she said, sharply, "We are miles away from Bower's; we must go back."

"It won't take us long," he said, easily, and presently they were purring up-stream.

Then all at once the motor stopped. Geoffrey, inspecting it with a flashlight, said, succinctly, "Engine's on the blink."

"You mean that we can't go on?"

"Oh, I'll tinker it up. Only you'll have to let me get into that box under the stern seat for the tools. You can hold the light while I work."

As he worked they drifted. They passed the second bridge. Anne, steering, grew cold and shivered. But she did not complain. She was glad, however, when Geoffrey said, "You'd better curl down among the cushions, and let me wrap you in this rug."

"Can you manage without me?"

"Yes. I've patched it up partially. And you'll freeze in this bitter air."

The wind had changed and there was now no moon. She was glad of the warmth of the rug and the comfort of the cushioned space. She shut her eyes, after a time, and, worn out by the emotions of the day, she dropped into fitful slumber.

Then Geoffrey, his hair blown back by the wind, stood at the wheel and steered his boat not up-stream toward the bridge at Bower's, but straight down toward the wider waters, where the river stretches out into the Bay.

CHAPTER XII

In Which Eve Usurps an Ancient Masculine Privilege.

AUNT MAUDE CHESLEY belonged to the various patriotic societies which are dependent on Revolutionary fighting blood, on Dutch forbears, or on the ancestral holding of Colonial office. The last stood highest in her esteem. It was the hardest to get into, hence there was about it the sanctity of exclusiveness. Any man might spill his blood for his country, and among those early Hollanders were many whose blood was red instead of blue, but it was only a choice few who in the early days of the country's history had been appointed by the Crown or elected by the people to positions of influence and of authority.

When Aunt Maude went to the meeting of her favorite organization, she wore always black velvet which showed the rounds of her shoulders, point lace in a deep bertha, the family diamonds, and all of her badges. The badges had bars and jewels, and the effect was imposing.

Evelyn laughed at her. "Nobody cares for ancestors any more. Not since people began to hunt

them up. You can find anything if you look for it, Aunt Maude. And most of the crests are bought or borrowed so that if one really belongs to you, you don't like to speak of it, any more than to tell that you are a lady or take a daily bath."

"Our ancestors," said Aunt Maude solemnly, "are our heritage from the past—but you have reverence for nothing."

"They were a jolly old lot," Eve agreed, "and I am proud of them. But some of their descendants are a scream. If men had their minds on being ancestors instead of bragging of them there'd be some hope for the future of old families."

Aunt Maude, having been swathed by her maid in a silk scarf, so that her head was stiff with it, batted her eyes. "If you would go with me," she said, "and hear some of the speeches, you might look at it differently. Now there was a Van Tromp——"

"And in New England there were Codcapers, and in Virginia there were Pantops. I take off my hat to them, but not to their descendants, indiscriminately."

And now Aunt Maude, more than ever mummified in a gold and black brocade wrap trimmed with black fur, steered her uncertain way toward the motor at the door.

"People in my time——" floated over her shoulder and then as the door closed behind her, her eloquence was lost.

Eve, alone, faced a radiant prospect. Richard was coming. He had telephoned. She had not told Aunt Maude. She wanted him to herself.

When at last he arrived she positively crowed over him. "Oh, Dicky, this is darling of you."

A shadow fell across her face, however, when he told her why he had come.

"Austin wanted me with him in an operation. He telegraphed me and I took the first train. I have been here for two days without a minute's time in which to call you up."

"I thought that perhaps you had come to see me."

"Seeing you is a pleasant part of it, Eve."

He was really glad to see her; to be drawn away by it all from the somberness of his thoughts. The night before he had left the train on the Jersey side and had ferried over so that he might view once more the sky-line of the great city. There had been a stiff breeze blowing and it had seemed to him that he drew the first full breath since the moment when he had walked with Geoffrey in the wood. What had followed had been like a dream; the knowledge that the great surgeon wanted him, his mother's quick service in helping him pack his bag, the walk to Bower's in the fragrant dark to catch the ten o'clock train; the moment on the porch at Bower's when he had learned from a word dropped by Beulah that Anne was on the river with Geoffrey.

And now it all seemed so far away—the river with

the moon's broad path, Bower's low house and its yellow-lighted panes, the silence, the darkness.

Since morning he had done a thousand things. He had been to the hospital and had yielded once more to the spell of its splendid machinery ; he had talked with Austin and the talk had been like wine to a thirsty soul. In such an atmosphere a man would have little time to—think. He craved the action, the excitement, the uplift.

He came back to Eve's prattle. "I told Winifred Ames we would come to her little supper after the play. I was to have gone with her and Pip and Jimmie Ford. Tony is away. But when you 'phoned, I called the first part of it off. I wanted to have a little time just with you, Richard."

He smiled at her. "Who is Jimmie Ford?"

"A lovely youth who is in love with me—or with my money—he was at your birthday party, Dicky Boy ; don't you remember ? "

"The Blue Butterfly? Yes. Is he another victim, Eve?"

She shrugged. "Who knows? If he is in love with me, he'll get hurt ; if he is in love with Aunt Maude's money, he won't get it. Oh, how can a woman know?" The lightness left her voice "Sometimes I think that I'll go off somewhere and see if somebody won't love me for what I am, and not for what he thinks Aunt Maude is going to leave me."

"And you with a string of scalps at your belt, and Pip ready at any moment to die for you."

She nodded. "Pip is pure gold. Nobody can question his motives. And anyhow he has more money than I can ever hope to have. But I am not in love with him, Dicky."

"You are not in love with anybody. You are a cold-blooded little thing, Eve. A man would need much fire to melt your ice."

"Would he?"

"You know he would."

He swept away from her petulances to the thing which was for the moment uppermost in his mind. "I have had an offer, Eve, from Austin. He wants an assistant, a younger man who can work into his practice. It is a wonderful working opportunity."

"It would be wicked to throw it away," she told him, breathlessly, "wicked, Richard."

"It looks that way. But there's mother to think of, and Crossroads has come to mean a lot to me, Eve."

"Oh, but New York, Dicky! Think of the good times we'd have, and of your getting into Austin's line of work and his patients. You would be rolling in your own limousine before you'd know it."

Rolling in his own limousine! And missing the rhythm of big Ben's measured trot——!

"*I think—she was the—most beautiful*——"

As they motored to Winifred's, Eve spoke of his quiet mood. "Why don't you talk, Dicky?"

"It has been a busy day—I'll wake up presently and realize that I am here."

It was before he went down-stairs at the Dutton-Ames that he had a moment alone with Jimmie Ford.

Jimmie was not in the best of moods. Winifred had asked him a week ago to join a choice quartette which included Pip and Eve. Of course Meade made a troublesome fourth, but Jimmie's conceit saved him from realizing the real fact of the importance of the plain and heavy Pip to that group. And now, things had been shifted, so that Eve had stayed to talk to a country doctor, and he had been left to the callow company of an indefinite debutante whom Winifred had invited to fill the vacancy.

"When did you come down, Brooks?" he asked coldly.

"This morning."

"Nice old place of yours in Harford."

"Yes."

"Owned it long?"

"Several generations."

"Oh, ancestral halls, and all that——?"

"Yes."

"I saw Cynthia Warfield's picture on the wall—used to know the family down in Carroll—our old estates joined—Anne Warfield and I were brought up together."

They had reached the head of the stairway. Richard stopped and stood looking down. "Anne Warfield?"

"Yes. Surprised to find her teaching. I fancy they've been pretty hard up—grandfather drank, and all that, you know."

"I didn't know." It was now Richard's turn to speak coldly.

"Oh, yes, ran through with all their money. Years ago. Anne's a little queen. Engaged to her once myself, you know. Boy and girl affair, broken off——"

Below them in the hall, Richard could see the women with whom he was to sup. Shining, shimmering figures in silk and satin and tulle. For these, softness and ease of living. And that other one! Oh, the cheap little gown, the braided hair! Before he had known her she had been Jimmie's and now she was Geoffrey's. And he had fatuously thought himself the first.

He threw himself uproariously into the fun which followed. After all, it was good to be with them again, good to hear the familiar talk of people and of things, good to eat and drink and be merry in the fashion of the town, good to have this taste of the old tumultuous life.

He and Eve went home together. Philip's honest face clouded as he saw them off. "Don't run away with her, Brooks," he said, as he leaned in to have a last look at her. "Good-night, little lady."

"Good-night."

It was when they were motoring through the park that Eve said, "I am troubled about Pip."

"Why?"

"Oh, I sometimes have a feeling that he has a string tied to me—and that he is pulling me—his way. And I don't want to go. But I shall, if something doesn't save me from him, Richard."

"You can save yourself."

"That's all you know about it. Women take what they can get in this world, not what they want. Every morning Pip sends me flowers, sweetheart roses to-day, and lilies yesterday, and before that gardenias and orchids, and when I open the boxes every flower seems to be shouting, 'Come and marry me, come and marry me.'"

"No woman need marry a man she doesn't care for, Eve."

"Lots of them do."

"You won't. You are too sensible."

"Am I?"

"Of course."

She sighed a little. "I am not half as sensible as you think."

When they reached home, they found Aunt Maude before them. She had been unswathed from her veil and her cloak, released from her black velvet, and was comfortable before her sitting-room fire in a padded wisteria robe and a boudoir cap with satin bow.

Underneath the cap there were no flat gray curls. These were whisked mysteriously away each night by Hannah, the maid, to be returned in the morning, fresh from their pins with no hurt to Aunt Maude's old head.

She greeted Richard cordially. "I sent Hannah down when I heard you. Eve didn't let me know you were here; she never lets me know. And now tell me about your poor mother."

"Why poor, dear lady? You know she loves Crossroads."

"How anybody can —— I'd die of loneliness. Now to-night—so many people of my own kind ——"

"Everybody in black velvet or brocade, everybody with badges, everybody with blue blood," Eve interrupted flippantly; "nobody with ideas, nobody with enthusiasms, nobody with an ounce of originality—ugh!"

"My dear ——!"

"Dicky, Aunt Maude's idea of Heaven is a place where everybody wears coronets instead of halos, and where the angel chorus is a Dutch version of 'God save the King.'"

"My idea of Heaven," Aunt Maude retorted, "is a place where young girls have ladylike manners."

Richard roared. It had been long since he had tasted this atmosphere of salt and spice. Aunt Maude and her sprightly niece were as good as a play.

"How long shall you be in town, Richard?"

"Three or four days. It depends on the condition of our patient. It may be necessary to operate again, and Austin wants me to be here."

"Aunt Maude, Dicky may come back to New York to live."

"He should never have left. What does your mother think of it?"

"I haven't told her of Austin's offer. I shall write to-night."

"If she has a grain of sense, she'll make you take it."

Eve was restless. "Come on down, Dicky. It is time that Aunt Maude was in bed."

"I never go until you do, Eve, and in my day young men went home before morning."

"Dearest, Dicky shall leave in ten minutes. I'll send him."

But when they were once more in the great drawing-room, she forgot the time limit. "Don't let your mother settle things for you, Dicky. Think of yourself and your future. Of your—manhood. Dicky—please."

She was very lovely as she stood before him, with her hands on his shoulders. "I want you to be the biggest of them—all," she said, and her laugh was tremulous.

"I know. Eve, I want to stay."

"Oh, Dicky—really?"

"Really, Eve."

Their hands came together in a warm clasp.

She let him go after that. There had been nothing more than brotherly warmth in his manner, but it was enough that in the days to come she was to have him near her.

Richard, writing to his mother, told her something of his state of mind. "I'll admit that it tempts me. It is a big thing, a very big thing, to work with a man like that. Yet knowing how you feel about it, I dare not decide. We shall have to face one thing, however. The Crossroads practice will never be a money-making practice. I know how little money means to you, but the lack of it will mean that I shall be tied to rather small things as the years go on. I should like to be one of the Big Men, mother. You see I am being very frank. I'll admit that I dreamed with you—of bringing all my talents to the uplift of a small community, of reviving at Crossroads the dignity of other days. But—perhaps we have dreamed too much—the world doesn't wait for the dreamers—the only way is to join the procession."

In the day which intervened between his letter and his mother's answer, he had breakfast with Eve in the room with the flame-colored fishes and the parrot and the green-eyed cat. He motored with Eve out to Westchester, and they had lunch at an inn on the side of a hill which overlooked the Hudson; later they went to a matinée, to tea in a special little

corner of a down-town hotel for the sake of old days, then back again to dress for dinner at Eve's, with Aunt Maude at the head of the table, and Tony and Winifred and Pip completing the party. Then another play, another supper, another ride home with Eve, and in the morning in quiet contrast to all this, his mother's letter.

"Dear Boy," she said, "I am glad you spoke to me frankly of what you feel. I want no secrets between us, no reservations, no sacrifices which in the end may mean a barrier between us.

"Our sojourn at Crossroads has been an experiment. And it has failed. I had hoped that as the days went on, you might find happiness. Indeed, I had been deceiving myself with the thought that you were happy. But now I know that you are not, and I know, too, what it must mean to you to feel that from among all the others you have been chosen to help a great man like Dr. Austin, who was the friend of my father, and my friend through everything.

"But Richard, I can't go back. I literally crawled to Crossroads, after my years in New York, as a wounded animal seeks its lair. And I have a morbid shrinking from it all, unworthy of me, perhaps, but none the less impossible to overcome. I feel that the very stones of the streets would speak of the tragedy and dishonor of the past: houses would stare at me, the crowds would shun me.

"And now I have this to propose. That I stay

here at Crossroads, keeping the old house open for you. David is near me, and any one of Cousin Mary Tyson's daughters would be glad to come to me. And you shall run down at week-ends, and tell me all about it, and I shall live in your letters and in the things which you have to tell. We can be one in spirit, even though there are miles between us. This is the only solution which seems possible to me at this moment. I cannot hold you back from what may be your destiny. I can only pray here in my old home for the happiness and success that must come to you—my boy—my little—boy ——"

The letter broke off there. Richard, high up in the room of the big hotel, found himself pacing the floor. Back of the carefully penned lines of his mother's letter he could see her slender tense figure, the whiteness of her face, the shadow in her eyes. How often he had seen it when a boy, how often he had sworn that when he was the master of the house he would make her happy.

The telephone rang. It was Eve. "I was afraid you might have left for the hospital."

"I am leaving in a few minutes."

"Can you go for a ride with me?"

"In the afternoon. There's to be another operation—it may be very late before I am through."

"Not too late for dinner out of town somewhere and a ride under the May moon." Her voice rang high and happy.

For the rest of the morning he had no time to think of his own affairs. The operation was extremely rare and interesting, and Austin's skill was superb. Richard felt as if he were taking part in a play, in which the actors were the white clad and competent doctors and nurses, and the stage was the surgical room.

Eve coming for him, found him tired and taciturn. She respected his mood, and said little, and they rode out and out from the town and up and up into the Westchester hills, dotted with dogwood, pink and white like huge nosegays. As the night came on there was the fragrance of the gardens, the lights of the little towns; then once more the shadows as they swept again into the country.

"We will go as far as we dare," Eve said. "I know an adorable place to dine."

She tried more than once to bring him to speak of Austin, but he put her off. "I am dead tired, dear girl; you talk until we have something to eat."

"Oh," Eve surveyed him scornfully, "oh, men and their appetites!"

But she had a thousand things to tell him, and her light chatter carried him away from somber thoughts, so that when they reached at last the quaint hostelry toward which their trip had tended, he was ready to meet Eve's mood half-way, and enter with some zest upon their gay adventure. She chose a little table on a side porch, where they were screened from ob-

servation, and which overlooked the river, and there took off her hat and powdered her nose, and gave her attention to the selection of the dinner.

"A clear soup, Dicky Boy, and Maryland chicken, hot asparagus, a Russian dressing for our lettuce, and at the end red raspberries with little cakes. They are sponge cakes, Dicky, filled with cream, and they are food for the gods."

He was hungry and tired and he wanted to eat. He was glad when the food came on.

When he finished he leaned back and talked shop. "If you don't like it," he told Eve, "I'll stop. Some women hate it."

"I love it," Eve said. "Dicky, when I dream of your future you are always at the top of things, with smaller men running after you and taking your orders."

He smiled. "Don't dream. It doesn't pay. I've stopped."

She glanced at him. His face was stern.

"What's up, Dicky Boy?"

He laughed without mirth. "Oh, I'm beginning to think we are puppets pulled by strings; that things happen as Fate wills and not as we want them."

"Men haven't any right to talk that way. It's their world. If you were a woman you might complain. Look at me! Everything that I have comes from Aunt Maude. She could leave me without a

cent if she chose, and she knows it. She owns me, and unless I marry she'll own me until I die."

"You'll marry, Eve. Old Pip will see to that."

"Pip," passionately. "Dicky, why do you always fling Pip in my face?"

"Eve ——!"

"You do. Everybody does. And I don't want him."

"Then don't have him. There are others. And you needn't lose your temper over a little thing like that."

"It isn't a little thing."

"Oh, well ——" The conversation lapsed into silence until Eve said, "I was horrid—and I think we had better be getting back, Dicky."

Again in the big limousine, with the stolid chauffeur separated from them by the glass screen, she said, softly, "Oh, Dicky, it seems too good to be true that we shall have other nights like this—other rides. When will you come up for good?"

"I am not coming, Eve."

She turned to him, her face frozen into whiteness.

"Not coming? Why not?"

"While mother lives I must make her happy."

"Oh, don't be goody-goody."

He blazed. "I'm not."

"You are. Aren't you ever going to live your own life?"

"I am living it. But I can't break mother's heart."

"You might as well break hers as—mine."

He stared down at her. Mingled forever after with his thoughts of that moment was a blurred vision of her whiteness and stillness. Her slim hands were crossed tensely on her knees.

He laid one of his own awkwardly over them. "Dear girl," he said, "you don't in the least mean it."

"I do. Dicky, why shouldn't I say it? Why shouldn't I? Hasn't a woman the right? Hasn't she?"

She was shaking with silent sobs, the tears running down her cheeks. He had not seen her cry like this since little girlhood, when her mother had died, and he, a clumsy lad, had tried to comfort her.

He was faced by a situation so stupendous that for a moment he sat there stunned. Proud little Eve for love of him had made the supreme sacrifice of her pride. Could any man in his maddest moment have imagined a thing like this——!

He bent down to her, and took her hands in his.

"Hush, Eve, hush. I can't bear to see you cry. I'm not the fellow to make you happy, dear."

Her head dropped against his shoulder. The perfumed gold of her hair was against his cheeks. "No one else can make me happy, Dicky."

Then he felt the world whirl about him, and it seemed to him as he answered that his voice came from a long distance.

"If you'll marry me, Eve, I'll stay."

It was the knightly thing to do, and the necessary thing. Yet as they swept on through the night, his mother's face, all the joy struck from it, seemed to stare at him out of the darkness.

CHAPTER XIII

In Which Geoffrey Plays Cave Man.

MINE OWN UNCLE:

I don't know whether to begin at the beginning or at the end of what I have to tell you. And even now as I think back over the events of the last twenty-four hours I feel that I must have dreamed them, and that I will wake and find that nothing has really happened.

But something has happened, and "of a strangeness" which makes it seem to belong to some of those queer old dime "thrillers" which you never wanted me to read.

Last night Geoffrey Fox asked me to go out with him on the river. I don't often go at night, yet as there was a moon, it seemed as if I might.

We went in Brinsley Tyson's motor boat. It is big and roomy and is equipped with everything to make one comfortable for extended trips. I wondered a little that Geoffrey should take it, for he has a little boat of his own, but he said that Mr. Tyson had offered it, and they had been out in it all day.

Well, it was lovely on the water; I was feeling tired and as blue as blue—some day I may tell you

about *that*, Uncle Rod, and I was glad of the quiet and beauty of it all; and of late Geoffrey and I have been such good friends.

Can't you ever really know people, Uncle Rod, or am I so dull and stupid that I misunderstand? Men are such a puzzle—all except you, you darling dear—and if you were young and not my uncle, even you might be as much of a puzzle as the rest.

Well, I would never have believed it of Geoffrey Fox, and even now I can't really feel that he was responsible. But it isn't what I think but what you will think that is important—for I have, somehow, ceased to believe in myself.

It was when we reached the second bridge that I told Geoffrey that we must turn back. We had, even then, gone farther than I had intended. But as we started up-stream, I felt that we would get to Bower's before Peter went back on the bridge, which is always the signal for the house to close, although it is never really closed; but the lights are turned down and the family go to bed, and I have always known that I ought not to stay out after that.

Well, just as we left the second bridge, something happened to the motor.

Uncle Rod, *that was last night*, and I didn't get back to Bower's until a few hours ago, and here is the whole truth before I write any more ——

Geoffrey Fox tried to run away with me!

It would seem like a huge joke if it were not so

serious. I don't know how he got such an idea in his head. Perhaps he thought that life was like one of his books—that all he had to do was to plan a plot, and then make it work out in his own way. He said, in that first awful moment, when I knew what he had done, "I thought I could play Cave Man and get away with it." You see, he hadn't taken into consideration that I wasn't a Cave Woman!

When the engine first went wrong I wasn't in the least worried. He fixed it, and we went on. Then it stopped and we drifted: the moon went down and it was cold, and finally Geoffrey made me curl up among the cushions. I felt that it must be very late, but Geoffrey showed me his watch, and it was only a little after ten. I knew Peter wouldn't be going to the bridge until eleven, and I hoped by that time we would be home.

But we weren't. We were far, far down the river. At last I gave up hope of arriving before the house closed, but I knew that I could explain to Mrs. Bower.

After that I napped and nodded, for I was very tired, and all the time Geoffrey tinkered with the broken motor. Each time that I waked I asked questions but he always quieted me—and at last—as the dawn began to light the world, a pale gray spectral sort of light, Uncle Rod, I saw that the shore on one side of us was not far away, but on the other it was a mere dark line in the distance—double

the width that the river is at Bower's. Geoffrey was standing up and steering toward a little pier that stuck its nose into shallow water. Back of the pier was what seemed to be an old warehouse, and in a clump of trees back of that there was a thin church spire.

I said, "Where are we?" and he said, "I am not sure, but I am going in to see if I can get the motor mended."

I couldn't think of anything but how worried the Bowers would be. "You must find a telephone," I told him, "and call Beulah, and let her know what has happened."

He ran up to the landing and fastened the boat, and then he helped me out. "We will sit here and have a bit of breakfast first," he said; "there's some coffee left in Brinsley's hot and cold bottle, and some supplies under the stern seat."

It was really quite cheerful sitting there, eating sardines and crackers and olives and orange marmalade. A fresh breeze was blowing, and the river was wrinkled all over its silver surface, and we could see nothing but water ahead of us, straight to the horizon, where there was just the faint streak of a steamer's smoke.

"We must be almost in the Bay," I said. "Couldn't you have steered up-stream instead of down?"

He sat very still for a moment looking at me, and

then he said quickly and sharply, "I didn't want to go up-stream. I wanted to go down. And I came in here because I saw a church spire, and where there is a church there is always a preacher. Will you marry me, Mistress Anne?"

At first I thought that he had lost his mind. Uncle Rod, I don't think that I shall ever see a sardine or a cracker without a vision of Geoffrey with his breakfast in his hand and his face as white as chalk above it.

"That's a very silly joke," I said. "Why should I marry you?"

He looked at me, and—I didn't need any answer, for it came to me then that I had been out all night on the river with him, and that he was thinking of a way to quiet people's tongues!

I tried to speak, but my voice shook, and finally I managed to stammer that when we got back I was sure it would be all right.

"It won't be all right," he said; "the world will have things to say about you, and I'd rather die than have them say it. And I could make you happy, Anne."

Then I told him that I did not love him, that he was my dear friend, my brother—and suddenly his face grew red, and he came over and caught hold of my hands. "I am not your brother," he said. "I want you whether you want me or not. I could make you love me—I've got to have you in my life.

I am not going on alone to meet darkness—and despair."

Oh, Uncle Rod, then I knew and I looked straight at him and asked: "Geoffrey Fox, did you break the motor?"

"It isn't broken," he said; "there has never been a thing the matter with it."

I think for the first time that I was a little afraid. Not of him, but of what he had done.

"Oh, how could you," I said, "how could you?"

And it was then that he said, "I thought that I could play Cave Man and get away with it."

After that he told me how much he cared. He said that I had helped him and inspired him. That I had shown him a side of himself that no one else had ever shown. That I had made him believe in himself—and in—God. That if he didn't have me in his life his future would be—dead. He begged and begged me to let him take me into the little town and find some one to marry us. He said that if we went back I would be lost to him—that—that Brooks would get me—that was the way he put it, Uncle Rod. He said that he was going blind; that I hadn't any heart; that he would love me as no one else could; that he would write his books for me; that he would spend his whole life making it up to me.

I don't know how I held out against him. But I did. Something in me seemed to say that I must

hold out. Some sense of dignity and of self-respect, and at last I conquered.

"I will not marry you," I said; "don't speak of it again. I am going back to Bower's. I am not a heroine of a melodrama, and there's no use to act as if I had done an unpardonable thing. I haven't, and the Bowers won't think it, and nobody else will know. But you have hurt me more than I can tell by what you have done to-night. When you first came to Bower's there were things about you that I didn't like, but—as I came to know you, I thought I had found another man in you. The night at the Crossroads ball you seemed like a big kind brother —and I told you what I had suffered, and now you have made me suffer."

And then—oh, I don't quite know how to tell you. He dropped on his knees at my feet and hid his face in my dress and cried—hard dry sobs—with his hands clutching.

I just couldn't stand it, Uncle Rod, and presently I was saying, "Oh, you poor boy, you poor boy——" and I think I smoothed his hair, and he whispered, "Can't you?" and I said, "Oh, Geoffrey, I can't."

At last he got control of himself. He sat at a little distance from me and told me what he was going to do.

"I think I was mad," he said. "I can't even ask your forgiveness, for I don't deserve it. I am going

up to town to telephone to Beulah, and when I come back I will take you up the river where you can get the train. I shall break the engine and leave it here, so that when Brinsley gets it back there will be nothing to spoil our story."

He was gone half an hour. When he came he brought me a hat. He had bought it at the one little store where he had telephoned, and he had bought one for himself. I think we both laughed a little when we put them on, although it wasn't a laughing matter, but we did look funny.

He unfastened the boat, and we turned up the river and in about an hour we came into quite a thriving port with the Sunday quiet over everything, and Geoffrey did things to the engine that put it out of commission, and then he left it with a man on the pier, and we took the train.

It seems that all night at Bower's they were looking for us. They even took other boats, and followed. And they called. I know that if Geoffrey heard them call he didn't answer.

Every one seemed to accept our explanation. Perhaps they thought it queer. But I can't help that.

Geoffrey is going away to-morrow. When we were alone in the hall for a moment he told me that he was going. "If you can ever forgive me," he said, "will you write and tell me? What I have done may seem unforgivable. But when a man

dreams a great deal he sometimes thinks that he can make his dreams come true."

Uncle Rod, I think the worst thing in the whole wide world is to be disappointed in people. As soon as school closes I am coming back to you. Perhaps you can make me see the sunsets. And what do you say about life now? Is it what we make it? Did I have anything to do with this mad adventure? Yet the memory of it will always—smirch.

And if life isn't what we make it, where is our hope and where are our sunsets? Tell me that, you old dear. ANNE.

P. S. When I opened my door just now, I found that Geoffrey had left on the threshold his little Napoleon, and a letter. I am sending the letter to you. I cried over it, and I am afraid it is blurred—but I haven't time to make a copy before the mail goes.

What Geoffrey said:

MY LITTLE CHILD:

I am calling you that because there is something so young and untouched about you. If I were an artist I should paint you as young Psyche—and there should be a hint of angels' wings in the air and it should be spring—with a silver dawn. But if I could paint should I ever be able to put on canvas the light in your eyes when you have talked to me by the fire, my kind little friend whom I have lost?

I cannot even now understand the mood that possessed me. Yet I will be frank. I saw you go into the wood with Richard Brooks. I felt that if he should say to you what I was sure he wanted to say that there would be no chance for me—so I hurried after you. The thing which was going to happen must not happen; and I arrived in time. After that I told Brooks as we walked back that I was going to marry you, and I took you out in my boat intending to make my words come true.

These last few days have been strange days. Perhaps when I have described them you may find it in your heart to feel sorry for me. The book is finished. That of itself has left me with a sense of loss, as if I had put away from me something that had been a part of me. Then—I am going blind. Do you know what that means, the desperate meaning? To lose the light out of your life—never to see the river as I saw it this morning? Never to see the moonlight or the starlight—never to see your face?

The specialist has given me a few months—and then darkness.

Was it selfishness to want to tie you to a blind man? If you knew that you were losing the light wouldn't you want to steal a star to illumine the night?—and you were my—Star.

I am going now to my little sister, Mimi. She leaves the convent in a few days. There are just the two of us. I have been a wayward chap, loving my

own way; it will be a sorry thing for her to find, I fancy, that henceforth I shall be in leading strings.

It is because of this thing that is coming that I am begging you still to be my friend—to send me now and then a little letter; that I may feel in the night that you are holding out your hand to me. There can be no greater punishment than your complete silence, no greater purgatory than the thought that I have forfeited your respect. Looking into the future I can see no way to regain it, but if the day ever comes when a Blind Beggar can serve you, you will show that you have forgiven him by asking that service of him.

I am leaving my little Napoleon for you. You once called him a little great man. Perhaps those of us who have some elements of greatness find our balance in something that is small and mean and mad.

Will you tell Brooks that you are not bound to me in any way? It is best that you should do it. I shall hope for a line from you. If it does not come—if I have indeed lost my little friend through my own fault—then indeed the shadows will shut me in.

GEOFFREY.

Uncle Rodman writes:

MY BELOVED NIECE:

Once upon a time you and I read together "The Arabian Nights," and when we had finished

the first book you laid your little hand on my knee and looked up at me. "Is it true, Uncle Rod?" you asked. "Oh, Uncle Rod, is it true?" And I said, "What it tells about the Roc's egg and the Old Man of the Sea and the Serpent is not true, but what it says about the actions and motives of people is true, because people have acted in that way and have thought like that through all the ages, and the tales have lived because of it, and have been written in all languages." I was sure, when I said it, that you did not quite understand; but you were to grow to it, which was all that was required.

Blessed child, what your Geoffrey Fox has done, though I hate him for it and blame him, is what other hotheads have done. The protective is not the primitive masculine instinct. Men have thought of themselves first and of women afterward since the beginning of time. Only with Christianity was chivalry born in them. And since many of our youths have elected to be pagan, what can you expect?

So your Geoffrey Fox being pagan, primitive—primordial, whatever it is now the fashion to call it, reverted to type, and you were the victim.

I have read his letter and might find it in my heart to forgive him were it not that he has made you suffer; but that I cannot forgive; although, indeed, his coming blindness is something that pleads for him. and his fear of it—and his fear of losing you.

I am glad that you are coming home to me. Margaret and her family are going away, and we can have their big house to ourselves during the summer. We shall like that, I am sure, and we shall have many talks, and try to straighten out this matter of dreams—and of sunsets, which is really very important, and not in the least to be ignored.

But let me leave this with you to ponder on. You remember how you have told me that when you were a tiny child you walked once between me and my good old friend, General Ross, and you heard it said by one of us that life was what we made it. Before that you had always cried when it rained; now you were anxious that the rain might come so that you could see if you could really keep from crying. And when the rain arrived you were so immensely entertained that you didn't shed a tear, and you went to bed that night feeling like a conqueror, and never again cried out against the elements.

It would have been dreadful if all your life you had gone on crying about rain, wouldn't it? And isn't this adventure your rainy day? You rose above it, dearest child. I am proud of the way you handled your mad lover.

Life *is* what we make it. Never doubt that. "He knows the water best who has waded through it," and I have lived long and have learned my lesson. When I knew that I could paint no more real pictures I knew that I must have dream pic-

tures to hang on the walls of memory. Shall I make you a little catalogue of them, dear heart—thus:

No. 1.—Your precious mother sewing by the west window in our shadowed sitting-room, her head haloed by the sunset.

No. 2.—Anne in a blue pinafore, with the wind blowing her hair back on a gray March morning.

No. 3.—Anne in a white frock amid a blur of candle-light on Christmas ——

Oh, my list would be long! People have said that I have lacked pride because I have chosen to take my troubles philosophically. There have been times when my soul has wept. I have cried often on my rainy days. But—there have always been the sunsets—and after that—the stars.

I fear that I have been but little help to you. But you know my love—blessed one. And the eagerness with which I await your coming. Ever your own UNCLE.

CHAPTER XIV

In Which There is Much Said of Marriage and of Giving in Marriage.

EVE'S green-eyed cat sat on a chair and watched the flame-colored fishes. It was her morning amusement. When her mistress came down she would have her cream and her nap. In the meantime, the flashing, golden things in the clear water aroused an ancient instinct. She reached out a quick paw and patted the water, flinging showers of sparkling drops on her sleek fur.

Aunt Maude, eating waffles and reading her morning paper, approved her. "I hope you'll catch them," she said, "especially the turtles and the tadpoles—the idea of having such things where you eat."

The green-eyed cat licked her wet paw, then she jumped down from the chair and trotted to the door to meet Eve, who picked her up and hugged her. "Pats," she demanded, "what have you been doing? Your little pads are wet."

"She's been fishing," said Aunt Maude, "in your aquarium. She has more sense than I thought."

Eve, pouring cream into a crystal dish, laughed. "Pats is as wise as the ages—you can see it in her eyes. She doesn't say anything, she just looks. Women ought to follow her example. It's the mysterious, the silent, that draws men. Now Polly prattles and prattles, and nobody listens, and we all get a little tired of her; don't we, Polly?"

She set the cream carefully by the green cushion, and Pats, classically posed on her haunches, lapped it luxuriously. The Polly-parrot coaxed and wheedled and was rewarded with her morning biscuit. The flame-colored fishes rose to the snowy particles which Eve strewed on the surface of the water, and then with all of her family fed, Eve turned to the table, sat down, and pulled away Aunt Maude's paper.

"My dear," the old lady protested.

"I want to talk to you," Eve announced. "Aunt Maude, I'm going to marry Dicky."

Aunt Maude pushed back her plate of waffles. The red began to rise in her cheeks. "Oh, of all the fools——"

"'He who calleth his brother a fool——'" Eve murmured pensively. "Aunt Maude, I'm in love with him."

"You're in love with yourself," tartly, "and with having your own way. The husband for you is Philip Meade. But he wants you, and so—you don't want him."

"Dicky wants me, too," Eve said, a little wistfully; "you mustn't forget that, Aunt Maude."

"I'm not forgetting it." Then sharply, "Shall you go to live at Crossroads?"

"No. Austin has made him an offer. He's coming back to town."

"What do you expect to live on?"

Silence. Then, uncertainly, "I thought perhaps until he gets on his feet you'd make us an allowance."

The old lady exploded in a short laugh. She gathered up her paper and her spectacles case and her bag of fancy work. Then she rose. "Not if you marry Richard Brooks. You may as well know that now as later, Eve. All your life you have shaken the plum tree and have gathered the fruit. You may come to your senses when you find there isn't any tree to shake."

The deep red in the cheeks of the old woman was matched by the red that stained Eve's fairness. "Keep your money," she said, passionately; "I can get along without it. You've always made me feel like a pauper, Aunt Maude."

The old woman's hand went up. There was about her a dignity not to be ignored. "I think you are saying more than you mean, Eve. I have tried to be generous."

They were much alike as they faced each other, the same clear cold eyes, the same set of the head,

the only difference Eve's youth and slenderness and radiant beauty. Perhaps in some far distant past Aunt Maude had been like Eve. Perhaps in some far distant future Eve's soft lines would stiffen into a second edition of Aunt Maude.

"I have tried to be generous," Aunt Maude repeated.

"You have been. I shouldn't have said that. But, Aunt Maude, it hasn't been easy to eat the bread of dependence."

"You are feeling that now," said the old lady shrewdly, "because you are ready for the great adventure of being poor with your young Richard. Well, try it. You'll wish more than once that you were back with your old—plum tree."

Flash of eye met flash of eye. "I shall never ask for another penny," Eve declared.

"I shall buy your trousseau, of course, and set you up in housekeeping, but when a woman is married her husband must take care of her." And Aunt Maude sailed away with her bag and her spectacles and her morning paper, and Eve was left alone in the black and white breakfast room, where Pats slept on her green cushion, the Polly-parrot swung in her ring, and the flame-colored fishes hung motionless in the clear water.

Eve ate no breakfast. She sat with her chin in her hand and tried to think it out. Aunt Maude had not proved tractable, and Richard's income would

be small. Never having known poverty, she was not appalled by the prospect of it. Her imagination cast a glamour over the future. She saw herself making a home for Richard. She saw herself inviting Pip and Winifred Ames and Tony to small suppers and perfectly served little dinners. She did not see herself washing dishes or cooking the meals. Knowing nothing of the day's work, how could she conceive its sordidness?

She roused herself presently to go and write notes to her friends. Triumphant notes which told of her happiness.

Her note to Pip brought him that night. He came in white-faced. As she went toward him, he rose to meet her and caught her hands in a hard grip, looking down at her. "You're mine, Eve. Do you think I am going to let any one else have you?"

"Don't be silly, Pip."

"Is it silly to say that there will never be for me any other woman? I shall love you until I die. If that is foolishness, I never want to be wise."

He was kissing her hands now.

"Don't, Pip, *don't*."

She wrenched herself away from him, and stood as it were at bay. "You'll get over it."

"Shall I? How little you know me, Eve. I haven't even given you up. If I were a story-book sort of hero I'd bestow my blessing on you and

Brooks and go and drive an ambulance in France, and break my heart at long distance. But I shan't. I shall stay right here on the job, and see that Brooks doesn't get you."

"Pip, I didn't think you were so—small."

The telephone rang. Eve answered it. "It was Winifred to wish me happiness," she said, as she came in from the hall.

She was blushing faintly. He gave her a keen glance. "What else did she say?"

"Nothing."

"You're fibbing. Tell me the truth, Eve."

She yielded to his masterfulness.

"Well, she said—'I wanted it to be Pip.'"

"Good old Win, I'll send her a bunch of roses." He wandered restlessly about the room, then came back to her. "Why, Eve, I planned the house—our house. It was to have the sea in front of it and a forest behind it, and your room was to have a wide window and a balcony, and under the balcony there was to be a rose garden."

"How sure you were of me, Pip."

"I have never been sure. But what I want, I—get. Remember that, dear girl. When I shut my eyes I can see you at the head of my table, in a high gold chair—like a throne."

She stared at him in amazement. "Pip, it doesn't sound a bit like you."

"No. What a man thinks is apt to be—different.

On the surface I'm a rather practical sort of fellow. But when I plan my future with you I am playing king to your queen, and I'm not half bad at it."

And now it was she who was restless. "If I married you, what would I get out of it but—money?"

"Thank you."

"You know I don't mean it that way. But I like to think that I can help Richard—in his career."

"You're not made of that kind of stuff. You want your own good time. Women who help men to achieve must be content to lose their looks and their figures and to do without pretty clothes, and you wouldn't be content. You want to live your own life, and be admired and petted and envied, Eve."

She faced him, blazing. "You and Aunt Maude and Win are all alike. You think I can't be happy unless I live in the lap of luxury. Well, I can tell you this, I'd rather have a crust of bread with Richard than live in a palace with you, Pip."

He stood up. "You don't mean it. But you needn't have put it quite that way, and some day you'll be sorry, and you'll tell me that you're sorry. Tell me now, Eve."

He put his hands on her shoulders, holding her with a masterful grip. Her eyes met his and fell. "Oh, I hate your—sureness."

"Some day you are going to love it. Look at me, Eve."

She forced herself to do so. But she was not at

ease. Then almost wistfully she yielded. "I—am sorry, Pip."

His hands dropped from her shoulders. "Good little girl."

He kissed both of her hands before he went away. "I am glad we are friends"—that was his way of putting it—"and you mustn't forget that some day we are going to be more than that," and when he had gone she found herself still shaken by the sureness of his attitude.

Pip on his way down-town stopped in to order Winifred's roses, and the next day he went to her apartment and unburdened his heart.

"If it was in the day of duels I'd call him out. Just at this moment I am in the mood for pistols or poison, I'm not sure which."

"Why not try—patience?"

He glanced at her quickly. "You think she'll tire?"

"I think—it can never happen. For Richard's sake I—hope not."

"Why for his sake?"

Winifred smiled. "I'd like to see him marry little Anne."

"The school-teacher?"

"Yes. Oh, I am broken-hearted to think he's spoiling Nancy's dreams for him. There was something so idyllic in them. And now he'll marry Eve."

"You say that as if it were a tragedy."

"It is, for him and for her. Eve was never made to be poor."

"Don't tell her that. She took my head off. Said she'd rather have a crust of bread with Richard ——"

"Oh, oh!"

"Than a palace with me."

"Poor Pip. It wasn't nice of her."

"I shall make her eat her words."

Winifred shook her head. "Don't be hard on her, Pip. We women are so helpless in our loves. Richard might make her happy if he cared enough, but he doesn't. Perhaps Eve will be broadened and deepened by it all. I don't know. No one knows."

"I know this. That you and Tony seem to get a lot out of things, Win."

"Of marriage? We do. Yet we've had all of the little antagonisms and differences. But underneath it we know—that we're made for each other. And that helps. It has helped us to push the wrong things out of our lives and to hold on to the right ones."

Philip's young face was set. "I wanted to have my chance with Eve. We are young and pretty light-weight on the surface, but life together might make us a bit more like you and Tony. And now Richard is spoiling things."

Back at Crossroads, Nancy was trying to convince her son that he was not spoiling things for her. "I

"I SHALL STAY—WITH YOU"

have always been such a dreamer, dear boy. It was silly for me to think that I could stand between you and your big future. I have written to Sulie Tyson, and she'll stay with me, and you can run down for week-ends—and I'll always have David."

"Mother, let me go to Eve and tell her ——"

"Tell her what?"

"That I shall stay—with you."

She was white with the whiteness which had never left her since he had told her that he was going to marry Eve.

"Hickory-Dickory, if I kept you here in the end you would hate me."

"*Mother!*"

"Not consciously. But I should be a barrier—and you'd find yourself wishing for—freedom. If I let you go—you'll come back now and then—and be—glad."

He gathered her up in his arms and declared fiercely that he would not leave her, but she stayed firm. And so the thing was settled, and as soon as he could settle his affairs at Crossroads he was to go to Austin.

Anne, writing to Uncle Rod about it, said:

"St. Michael is to marry the Lily-of-the-Field. You see, after all, he likes that kind of thing, though I had fancied that he did not. She is not as fine and simple as he is, and somehow I can't help feeling sorry.

"But that isn't the worst of it, Uncle Bobs. He is going back to New York. And now what becomes of *his* sunsets? I don't believe he ever had any. And oh, his poor little mother. She is fooling him and making him think that it is just as it should be and that she was foolish to expect anything else. But to me it is unspeakable that he should leave her. But he'll have Eve Chesley. Think of changing Nancy Brooks for Eve!"

It was at Beulah's wedding that Anne and Richard saw each other for the last time before his departure.

Beulah was married in the big front room at Bower's. She was married at six o'clock because it was easy for the farmer folk to come at that time, and because the evening could be given up afterward to the reception and a big supper and Beulah and Eric could take the ten o'clock train for New York.

She had no bridesmaids except Peggy, who was quite puffed up with the importance of her office. Anne had instructed her, and at the last moment held a rehearsal on the side porch.

"Now, play I am the bride, Peggy."

"You look like a bride," Peggy said. "Aren't you ever going to be a bride, Miss Anne?"

"I am not sure, Peggy. Perhaps no one will ever ask me."

"I'd ask you if I were a man," Peggy reassured her. "Now, go on and show me, Anne."

"You must take Beulah's bouquet when she hands it to you, and after she is married you must give it back to her, and ——"

"And then I must kiss her."

"You must let Eric kiss her first."

"Why?"

"Because he will be her husband."

"But I've been her sister for ever and ever."

"Oh, but a husband, Peggy. Husbands are *very* important."

"Why are they?"

"Well, they give you a new name and a new house, and you have new clothes to marry them in, and you go away with them on a honeymoon."

"What's a honeymoon?"

"The honey is for the sweetness, and the moon is for the madness, Peggy, dear."

"Do people always go away on trains for their honeymoons?"

"Not always. I shouldn't like a train. I should like to get into a boat with silver sails, and sail straight down a singing river into the heart of the sunset."

"Well, of course, you couldn't," said the plump and practical Peggy, "but it sounds nice to say it. Does our river sing, Miss Anne?"

"Yes."

"What does it say?"

Anne stretched out her arms with a little yearning

gesture. "It says—'*Come and see the world, see the world, see the world!*'"

"It never says that to me."

"Perhaps you haven't ears to hear, Peggy."

It was a very charming wedding. Richard was there and Nancy, and David and Brinsley. The country folk came from far and wide, and there was a brave showing of Old Gentlemen from Bower's who brought generous gifts for Peter's pretty daughter.

Richard, standing back of his mother during the ceremony, could see over her head to where Anne waited not far from Peggy to prompt her in her bridesmaid's duties. She was in white. Her dark hair was swept up in the fashion which she had borrowed from Eve. She seemed very small and slight against the background of Bower's buxom kinsfolk.

As he caught her eye he smiled at her, but she did not smile back. She felt that she could not. How could he smile with that little mother drooping before his very eyes? How *could* he?

She found herself later, when the refreshments were served, brooding over Nancy. The little lady tasted nothing, but was not permitted to refuse the cup of tea which Anne brought to her.

"I had it made especially for you," she said; "you looked so tired."

"I am tired. You see we are having rather strenuous days."

"I know."

"It isn't easy to let—him—go."

"It isn't easy for anybody to let him go."

The eyes of the two women went to where Richard in the midst of a protesting group was trying to explain his reasons for deserting Crossroads.

He couldn't explain. They had a feeling that he was turning his back on them. "It's hard lines to have a good doctor and then lose him," was the general sentiment. He was made to feel that it would have been better not to have come than to end by deserting.

He was aware that he had forfeited something precious, and he voiced his thought when he joined his mother and Anne.

"I'll never have a practice quite like this. Neighborhood ties are something they know little about in cities."

His mother smiled up at him bravely. "There'll be other things."

"Perhaps;" he patted her hand. Then he fired a question at Anne. "Do you think I ought to go?"

"How can I tell?" Her eyes met his candidly. "I felt when you came that I couldn't understand how a man could bury himself here. And now I am wondering how you can leave. It seems as if you belong."

"I know what you mean."

She went on: "And I can't quite think of this dear lady alone."

Nancy stopped her. "Don't speak of that, my dear. I don't want you to speak of it. It is right that Richard should go."

Anne was telling herself passionately that it was not right, when Beulah sent for her, and presently the little bride came down in her going-away gown, to be joined by Eric in the stiff clothes which seemed to rob him of the picturesqueness which belonged to him in less formal moments.

But Richard had no eyes for the bride and groom; he saw only Anne at the head of the stairway where he had first talked to her. How long ago it seemed, and how sweet she had been, and how shy.

The train was on the bridge, and a laughing crowd hurried out into the night to meet it. Peggy in the lead threw roses with a prodigal hand. "Kiss me, Beulah," she begged at the last.

Beulah bent down to her, then was lifted in Eric's strong arms to the platform. Then the train drew out and she was gone!

Alone on the stairway, Anne and Richard had a moment before the crowd swept back upon them.

"Dr. Brooks, take your mother with you."

"She won't go."

"Then stay with her."

He caught at the edge of her flowing sleeve, and held it as if he would anchor her to him. "Do you want me to stay?"

Her eyes came up to him. She saw in them some-

thing which lifted her above and beyond her doubts of him. She had an ineffable sense of having found something which she could never lose.

Then as he drew back he was stammering, "Forgive me. I have been wanting to wish you happiness. Geoffrey told me ——"

And now Peggy bore down upon them and all the heedless happy crowd, and Richard said, "Goodnight," and was gone.

Yet when she was left alone, Anne felt desperately that she should have shouted after him, "I am not going to marry Geoffrey Fox. I am not going to be married at all."

CHAPTER XV

In Which Anne Asks and Jimmie Answers.

"'A MONEYLESS man,'" said Uncle Rod, "'goes quickly through the market.'"

He had a basket on his arm. Anne, who was at her easel, looked up. "What did you buy?"

He laughed. His laugh had in it a quality of youth which seemed to contradict the signs of age which were upon him. Yet even these signs were modified by the carefulness of his attire and the distinction of his carriage. Great-uncle Rodman had been a dandy in his day, and even now his Norfolk coat and knickerbockers, his long divided beard and flowing tie gave him an air half foreign, wholly his own.

In his basket was a melon, crusty rolls, peaches and a bottle of cream.

"Such extravagance!" Anne said, as he showed her the bottle.

"It was the price of two chops. And not a lamb the less for it. Two chops would have been an extravagance, and now we shall feast innocently and economically."

"Where shall we eat?" Anne asked.

"Under the oak?"

She shook her head. "Too sunny."

"In the garden?"

"Not till to-night—people can see us from the road."

"You choose then." It was a game that they had played ever since she had come to him. It gave to each meal the atmosphere of an adventure.

"I choose," she clapped her hands, "I choose—by the fish-pond, Uncle Rod."

The fish-pond was at the end of the garden walk. Just beyond it a wooden gate connected a high brick wall and opened upon an acre or two of pasture where certain cows browsed luxuriously. The brick wall and the cows and the quiet of the corner made the fish-pond seem miles away from the town street which was faced by the front of Cousin Margaret's house.

The fish-pond was a favorite choice in the game played by Anne and Uncle Rod. But they did not always choose it because that would have made it commonplace and would have robbed it of its charm.

Anne, rising to arrange the tray, was stopped by Uncle Rodman. "Sit still, my dear; I'll get things ready."

To see him at his housekeeping was a pleasant sight. He liked it, and gave to it his whole mind. The peeling of the peaches with a silver knife, the

selection of a bowl of old English ware to put them in, and making of the coffee in a copper machine, the fresh linen, the roses as a last perfect touch.

Anne carried the tray, for his weak arm could not be depended upon; and by the fish-pond they ate their simple meal.

The old fishes had crumbs and came to the top of the water to get them, and a cow looking over the gate was rewarded by the remaining half of the crusty roll. She walked away presently to give place to a slender youth who had crossed the fields and now stood with his hat off looking in.

"If it isn't Anne," he said, "and Uncle Rod."

Uncle Rod stood up. He did not smile and he did not ask the slender youth to enter. But Anne was more hospitable.

"Come in, Jimmie," she said. "I can't offer you any lunch because we have eaten it all up. But there's some coffee."

Jimmie entered with alacrity. He had come back from New York in a mood of great discontent, to meet the pleasant news that Anne Warfield was in town. He had flown at once to find her. If he had expected the Fatted Calf, he found none. Uncle Rodman left them at once. He had a certain amount of philosophy, but it had never taught him patience with Jimmie Ford.

Jimmie drank a cup of coffee, and talked of his summer.

"Saw your Dr. Richard in New York, out at Austin's."

"Yes."

"He's going to marry Eve."

"Is he?"

"Yes. I don't understand what she sees in him —he isn't good style."

"He doesn't have to be."

"Why not?"

"Men like Richard Brooks mean more to the world than just—clothes, Jimmie."

"I don't see it."

"You wouldn't."

"Why shouldn't I?"

"Well, you look so nice in your clothes—and you need them to look nice in."

He stared at her. He felt dimly that she was making fun of him.

"From the way you put it," he said, with irritation, "from the way you put it any one might think that it was just my clothes ——"

"That make you attractive? Oh, *no*, Jimmie. You have nice eyes and—and a way with you."

She was sewing on a scrap of fancy work, and her own eyes were on it. She was as demure as possible, but she seemed unusually and disconcertingly self-possessed.

And now Jimmie became plaintive. Plaintiveness had always been his strong suit with Anne. He

was eager for sympathy. His affair with Eve had hurt his vanity.

"I have never seen a girl like her. She doesn't care what the world thinks. She doesn't care what any one thinks. She goes right along taking everything that comes her way—and giving nothing."

"Did you want her to give you—anything, Jimmie?"

"Me? Not me. She's a beauty and all that. But I wouldn't marry her if she were as rich as Rockefeller—and she isn't. Her money is her Aunt Maude's."

"Oh, Jimmie—sour grapes."

"Sour nothing. She isn't my kind. She said one day that if she wanted a man she'd ask him to marry her. That it was a woman's right to choose. I can't stand that sort of thing."

"But if she should ask you, Jimmie?"

Again he stared at her. "I jolly well shouldn't give her a chance. Not after the way she treated me."

"What way?"

"Oh, making me think I was the whole thing—and then—throwing me down."

"Oh, so you don't like being thrown down?"

"No. I don't like that kind of a woman. You know the kind of woman I like, Anne."

The caressing note in his voice came to her like

an echo of other days. But now it had no power to move her.

"I am not sure that I do know the kind of woman you like—tell me."

"Oh, I like a woman that is a woman, and makes a man feel that he's the whole thing."

"But mustn't he be the whole thing to make her feel that he is?"

He flung himself out of his chair and stood before her. "Anne," he demanded, "can't you do anything but ask questions? You aren't a bit like you used to be."

She laid down her work and now he could see her eyes. Such steady eyes! "No, I'm not like myself. You see, Jimmie, I have been away for a year, and one learns such a lot in a year."

He felt a sudden sense of loss. There had always been the old Anne to come back to. The Anne who had believed and had sympathized. Again his voice took on a plaintive note. "Be good to me, girl," he said. Then very low, "Anne, I was half afraid to come to-day."

"Afraid—why?"

"Oh, I suppose you think I acted like a—cad."

"What do *you* think?"

"Oh, stop asking questions. It was the only thing to do. You were poor and I was poor, and there wasn't anything ahead of me—or of you—surely you can't blame me."

"How can I blame you for what was, after all, my great good fortune?"

"Your what?"

She said it again, quietly, "My great good fortune, Jimmie. I couldn't see it then. Indeed, I was very unhappy and sentimental and cynical over it. But now I know what life can hold for me—and what it would not have held if I had married you."

"Anne, who has been making love to you?"

"Jimmie!"

"Oh, no woman ever talks like that until she has found somebody else. And I thought you were constant."

"Constant to what?"

"To the thought—to—to the thought of what we might be to each other some day."

"And in the meantime you were asking Eve to marry you. Was it her money that you wanted?"

"Her money! Do you think I am a fortune-hunter?"

"I am asking you, Jimmie?"

"For Heaven's sake, stop asking questions. You know how a pretty woman goes to my head. And she's the kind that flits away to make you follow. I can't fancy your doing that sort of a thing, Anne."

"No," quietly, "women like myself, Jimmie, go on expecting that things will come to them—and

when they don't come, we keep on—expecting. But somehow we never seem to be able to reach out our hands to take—what we might have."

He began to feel better. This was the wistful Anne of the old days.

"There has never been any one like you, Anne. It seems good to be here. Women like Eve madden a man, but your kind are so—comfortable."

Always the old Jimmie! Wanting his ease! After he had left her she sat looking out over the gate beyond the fields to the gold of the west.

When at last she went up to the house Uncle Rod had had his nap and was in his big chair on the front porch.

"Jimmie and I are friends again," she told him.

He looked at her inquiringly. "Real friends?"

"Surface friends. He is coming again to tell me his troubles and get my sympathy. Uncle Rod, what makes me so clear-eyed all of a sudden?"

He smoothed his beard. "My dear, 'the eyes of the hare are one thing, the eyes of the owl another.' You are looking at life from a different point of view. I knew that if you ever met a real man you'd know the difference between him and Jimmie Ford."

She came over, and standing behind him, put her hands on his shoulders. "I've found him, Uncle Rod."

"St. Michael?"

"Yes."

"Poor little girl."

"I am not poor, Uncle Rod. I am rich. It is enough to have known him."

The sunset was showing above the wooden gate. The cows had gone home. The old fish swam lazily in the shadowed water.

Anne drew her low chair to the old man's side. "Uncle Rod, isn't it queer, the difference between the things we ask for and the things we get? To have a dream come true doesn't mean always that you must get what you want, does it? For sometimes you get something that is more wonderful than any dream. And now if you'll listen, and not look at me, I'll tell you all about it, you darling dear."

It was in late August that Anne received the first proof sheets of Geoffrey's book. "I want you to read it before any one else. It will be dedicated to you and it is better than I dared believe—I could never have written it without your help, your inspiration."

It was a great book. Anne, remembering the moment the plot had been conceived on that quiet night by Peggy's bedside when she had seen the pussy cat and had heard the tinkling bell, laid it down with a feeling almost of awe.

She wrote Geoffrey about it. It was her first real letter to him. She had written one little note of forgiveness and of friendliness, but she had felt that for

a time at least she should do no more than that, and Uncle Rod had commended her resolution.

"Hot fires had best burn out," he said.

"If you never do anything else," Anne wrote to Geoffrey, "you can be content. There isn't a line of pot-boiling in it. It is as if you had dipped your pen in magic ink. Rereading it to Uncle Rodman has brought back the nights when we talked it over, and I can't help feeling a little peacock-y to know that I had a part in it.

"And now I am going to tell you what Uncle Rod's comment was when I finished the very last word. He sat as still as a solemn old statue, and then he said, 'Geoffrey Fox is a great man. No one could have written like that who was sordid of mind or small of soul.'

"If you knew my Uncle Rodman you would understand all that his opinion stands for. He is never flattering, but he has had much time to think—he is like one of the old prophets—so that, indeed, I sometimes feel that he ought to sing his sentences like David, instead of saying wise things in an ordinary way. And his proverbs! he has such a collection, he is making a book of them, and he digs into old volumes in all sorts of languages—oh, some day you must know him!

"I am going back to Crossroads. It seems that my work lies there. And I have great news for you. I am to live with Mrs. Brooks. She has her cousin,

Sulie Tyson, with her, but she wants me. And it will be so much better than Bower's.

"All through Mrs. Nancy's letters I can read her loneliness. She tries to keep it out. But she can't. She is proud of her son's success—but she feels the separation intensely. He has his work, she only her thoughts of him—and that's the tragedy.

"In the meantime, here we are at Cousin Margaret's doing funny little stunts in the way of cooking and catering. We can't afford the kind of housekeeping which requires servants, so it is a case of plain living and high thinking. Uncle Rod hates to eat anything that has been killed, and makes all sorts of excuses not to. He won't call himself a vegetarian, for he thinks that people who label themselves are apt to be cranks. So he does our bit of marketing and comes home triumphant with his basket innocent of birds or beasts, and we live on ambrosia and nectar or the modern equivalent. We are quite classic with our feasts by the old fish-pond at the end of the garden.

"Cousin Margaret's garden is flaming in the August days with phlox, and is fragrant with day lilies. There's a grass walk and a sun-dial, and best of all, as I have said, the fish-pond.

"And while I am on the subject of gardens, Uncle Rod rises up in wrath when people insist upon giving the botanical names to all of our lovely blooms. He says that the pedants are taking all of the poetry

out of language, and it does seem so, doesn't it? Why should we call larkspur *Delphinium?* or a forget-me-not *Myostis Palustria*, and would a primrose by the river's brim ever be to you or to me *primula vulgaris?* Uncle Rod says that a rose by any other name would *not* smell as sweet; and it is fortunate that the worst the botanists may do cannot spoil the generic—*rosa*.

"And now with my talk of Uncle Rod and of Me, I am stringing this letter far beyond all limits, and yet I have not told you half the news.

"I had a little note from Beulah, and she and Eric are at home in the Playhouse. She loves your silver candlesticks. So many of her presents were practical and she prefers the 'pretties.'

"You have heard, of course, that Dr. Brooks is to marry Eve Chesley. The wedding will not take place for some time. I wonder if they will live with Aunt Maude. I can't quite imagine Dr. Richard's wings clipped to such a cage."

She signed herself, "Always your friend, Anne Warfield."

Far up in the Northern woods Geoffrey read her letter. He could use his eyes a little, but most of the time he lay with them shut and Mimi read to him, or wrote for him at his dictation. He had grown to be very dependent on Mimi; there were even times when he had waked in the night, groping and calling out, and she had gathered him in her

arms and had held him against her breast until he stopped shaking and shivering and saying that he could not see.

He spoke her name now, and she came to him. He put Anne's letter in her hand. "Read it!" and when she had read, he said, "You see she says that I am great—and she used to say it. Am I, Mimi?"

"Oh, Geoffrey, yes."

"I want you to make it true, Mimi. Shall I begin my new book to-morrow?"

It was what she had wanted, what she had begged that he would do, but he had refused to listen. And now he was listening to another voice!

She brought her note-book, and sat beside him. Being ignorant of shorthand she had invented a little system of her own, and she was glad when she could make him laugh over her funny pot-hooks and her straggling sketches.

Thus in the darkness Geoffrey struggled and strove. "Speaking of candlesticks," he wrote to Anne, "it was as if a thousand candles lighted my world when I read your letter!"

CHAPTER XVI

In Which Pan Pipes to the Stars.

THAT Richard in New York should miss his mother was inevitable. But he was not homesick. He was too busy for that. Austin's vogue was tremendous.

"Every successful man ought to be two men," he told Richard, as they talked together one Sunday night at Austin's place in Westchester, "'another and himself,' as Browning puts it. Then there would be one to labor and the other to enjoy. I want to retire, and I can't. There's a selfish instinct in all of us to grip and hold. That is why I am pinning my faith to you. You can slip in as I slip out. I have visions of riding to hounds and sailing the seas some day, to say nothing of putting up a good game of golf. But perhaps that's a dream. A man can't get away from his work, not when he loves it."

"That's why you're such a success, sir," Richard told him, honestly; "you go to every operation as if it were a banquet."

Austin laughed. "I'm not such a ghoul. But there's always the wonder of it with me. I some-

times wish I had been a churchgoing man, Brooks There isn't much more for me to learn about bodies, but there's much about souls. I have a feeling that some day in some physical experiment I shall find tangible evidence of the spiritual. That's why I say my prayers to Something every night, and I rather think It's God."

"I know it's God," said Richard, simply, "on such a night as this."

They were silent in the face of the evening's beauty. The great trees on the old estate were black against a silver sky. White statues shone like pale ghosts among them. Back of Richard and his host, in a semicircle of dark cedars, a marble Pan piped to the stars.

"And in the cities babies are sleeping on fire escapes," Austin meditated. "If I had had a son I should have sent him to the slums to find his work. But the Fates have given me only Marie-Louise."

And now his laugh was forced. "Brooks, the Gods have checkmated me. Marie-Louise is the son of her father. I had planned that she should be the daughter of her mother. I sowed some rather wild oats in my youth, and waked in middle age to the knowledge that my materialism had led me astray. So I married an idealist. I wanted my children to have a spiritual background of character such as I have not possessed. And the result of

that marriage is—Marie-Louise! If she has a soul it is yet to be discovered."

"She is young. Give her time."

"I have been giving her time for eighteen years. I have wanted to see her mother in her, to see some gleam of that exquisite fineness. There are things we men, the most material of us, want in our women, and I want it in Marie-Louise. But she gives back what I have given her—nothing more. And I don't know what to do with her."

"Her mother?" Richard hinted.

"Julie is worn out with trying to meet a nature so unlike her own. Our love for each other has made us understand. But neither of us understands Marie-Louise. I sent her away to school, but she wouldn't stay. She likes her home and she hates rules. She loves animals, and if she were a boy she would practice medicine. Being a woman and having no outlet for her energies, she is freakish. You saw the way she was dressed at dinner."

"I liked it," Richard said; "all that dead silver with her red hair."

"But it is too—sophisticated, for a young girl. Why, man, she ought to be in white frocks and pearls, and putting cushions behind her mother's back."

"You say that because her mother wore white and pearls, and put cushions behind *her* mother's back. There aren't many of the white-frocks-and-pearls

kind left. It's a new generation. Perhaps dead silver with red hair is an expression of it. And it is we who don't understand."

"Perhaps. But it's a problem." Austin rose. "If you'll excuse me, Brooks, I'll go to my wife. We always read together on Sunday nights."

He sent Marie-Louise out to Richard. She came through the starlight, a shining figure in her silver dress, with a silver Persian kitten hugged up in her arms. She sat on the sun-dial and swung her jade bracelet for the kitten to play with.

"Dad and mother are reading the Bible. He doesn't believe in it, and she gets him to listen once a week. And then she reads the prayers for the day. When I was a little girl I had to listen—but never again!"

"Why not?"

"Why should I listen to things that I don't believe? To-night it is the ten virgins and their lamps. And Dad's pretending that he's interested. I am writing a play about it, but mother doesn't know. The Wise Virgins are Bernard Shaw women who know what they want in the way of husbands and go to it. The Foolish Virgins are the old maids, who think it unwomanly to get ready, and find themselves left in the end!"

The silver kitten clawed at the silver dress, and climbed on her mistress's shoulder.

"All of the parables make good modern plots.

Mother would be shocked if she knew I was writing them that way. So I don't tell her. Mother is a dear, but she doesn't understand. I should like to tell things to Dad, but he won't listen. If I were a boy he would listen. But he thinks I ought to be like mother."

She slipped from the sun-dial and came and sat in the chair which her father had vacated. "If I were a boy I should have studied medicine. I wanted to be a trained nurse, but Dad wouldn't let me. He said I'd hate having to do the hard work, and perhaps I should. I like to wear pretty clothes, and a nurse never has a chance."

"Perhaps you'll marry."

"Oh, no. I should *hate* to be like mother."

"Why?"

"She just lives for Dad. Now I couldn't do that. I am not going to marry. I don't like men. They ask too much. I like books and cats and being by myself. I am never lonesome. Sometimes I talk to Pan over there, and pretend he is playing to me on his pipes, and then I write poetry. Real poetry. I'll read it to you some time. There's one called 'The Rose Garden.' I wrote it about a woman who was a patient of father's. When she knew she was going to die she wrote him a little note and asked him to see that her body was cremated, and that the ashes were strewn over the roses in his garden. He didn't seem to see anything in it but

just a sick woman's fancy. But I knew that she was in love with him. And my poem tells that her blessed dust gathered itself into a gentle wraith which lives and breathes near him."

"And you aren't afraid to feel that her gentle wraith is here in the garden?"

"Why should I be? I don't believe in ghosts. I don't believe in fairies, either, or Santa Claus. But I like to read about them and write about them, and—and wish that it might be so."

There was something almost wistful in her voice. Richard, aware suddenly of what a child she was, bent forward.

"I think I half believe in fairies, and Christmas wouldn't be anything without Santa Claus, and as for the soul of your gentle lady, I have a feeling that it is finding Heaven in the rose garden."

She was stroking the silver kitten which had curled up in her lap. "I wish I weren't such a—heathen," she said, suddenly. "I know what you mean. But it is only the poetic sense in me that makes me know. I can't *believe* anything. Not about souls—or prayers. Do you ever pray?"

"Every night. On my knees."

"On your knees? Oh, is it as bad as that?"

Richard, writing to his mother, said of Marie-Louise, "Her mind isn't in a healthy state. It hasn't anything to feed on. Her father is too busy

and her mother too ill to realize that she needs companionship of a certain kind. I wish she might have been a pupil at the Crossroads school, with Anne Warfield for her teacher. But no hope of that."

He wrote, too, of his rushing days, and Nancy, answering, hid from him the utter hopelessness of her outlook. Her life began and ended with his letters and the week-ends which he was able to give her. But some of his week-ends had to be spent with Eve; a man cannot completely ignore the fact that he has a fiancée, and Richard would have been less than human if he had not responded to the appeal of youth and beauty. So he motored with Eve and danced with Eve, and did all of the delightful summer things which are possible in the big city near the sea. Aunt Maude went to the North Shore, but Eve stayed with Winifred, and wove about Richard her spells of flattery and of frivolity.

"I want to be near you, Dicky boy. If I'm not you'll work too hard."

"It is work that I like."

"I believe that you like it better than you do me, Dicky."

"Don't be silly, Eve."

"You are always saying that. Do you like your work better than you do me, Dicky?"

"Of course not." But he had no pretty things to say.

The life that he lived with her, however, and with Pip and Winifred and Tony was a heady wine which swept away regrets. He had no time to think. He worked by day and played by night, and often after their play there was work again. Now and then, as the Sunday night when he had first met Marie-Louise, he motored with Austin out to Westchester. Mrs. Austin spent her summers there. Long journeys tired her, and she would not leave her husband. Marie-Louise stayed at "Rose Acres" because she hated big hotels, and found cottage colonies stupid. The great gardens swept down to the river—the wide, blue river with the high bluffs on the sunset side.

The river at Bower's was not blue; it showed in the spring the red of the clay which was washed into it, and now and then a clear green when the rains held off, but it was rarely blue except on certain sapphire days in the fall, when a northwest wind swept all clouds from the sky.

And this was not a singing river. It was too near the sea, and too full of boats, and there was no reason why it should say, "*Come and see—come and see—the world,*" when the world was at its feet!

And so the great Hudson had no song for Richard. Yet now and then, as he walked down to it in the warm darkness, his ears seemed to catch a faint echo of the harmonies which had filled his soul on the day that Anne Warfield had dried her hair

on the bank of the old river at Bower's, and had walked with him in the wood.

Except at such moments, however, it must be confessed that he thought little of Anne Warfield. It hurt to think of her. And he was too much of a surgeon to want to turn the knife in the wound.

Marie-Louise, developing a keen interest in his affairs as they grew better acquainted, questioned him about Evelyn.

"Dad says you are going to marry her."

"Yes."

"Is she pretty?"

"Rather more than that."

"Why don't you bring her out?"

"Nobody asked me, sir, she said."

She flashed a smile at him.

"I like your nursery-rhyme way of talking. You are the humanest thing that we have ever had in this house. Mother is a harp of a thousand strings, and Dad is a dynamo. But you are flesh and blood."

"Thank you."

"I wish you'd ask your Evelyn out here, and her friends. For tea and tennis some Saturday afternoon. I want to see you together."

But after she had seen them together, she said, shrewdly, "You are not in love with her."

"I am going to marry her, child. Isn't that proof enough?"

"It isn't any proof at all. The big man is the one who really cares."

"The big man? Pip?"

"Is that what you call him? He looks at her like a dog waiting for a bone. And he brightens when she speaks to him. And her eyes are always on you and yours are never on her."

"Marie-Louise, you are an uncanny creature. Like your little silver cat. She watches mice and you watch me. I have a feeling that you are going to pounce on me."

"Some day I shall pounce," she poked her finger at him, "and shake you as my little cat shakes a mouse, and you'll wake up."

"Am I asleep, Marie-Louise?"

"Yes. You haven't heard Pan pipe." She was leaning on the sun-dial and looking up at the grinning god. "Men who live in cities have no ears to hear."

"Are you a thousand years old, Marie-Louise?"

"I am as old as the centuries," she told him gravely. "I played with Pan when the world was young."

They smiled at each other, and then he said, "My mother wants me to live in the country. Do you think if I were there I should hear Pan pipe?"

"Not if you were there because your mother wished it. It is only when you love it yourself that the river calls and you hear the fluting of the wind in the rushes."

It was an August Saturday, hot and humid. Marie-Louise was in thin white, but it was a white with a difference from the demure summer frocks of a former generation. The modern note was in the white fur which came high up about Marie-Louise's throat. Yet she did not look warm. Her skin was as pale as the pearls in her ears. Her red hair flamed, but without warmth; it rippled back from her forehead to a cool and classic coil.

"If you marry your Eve," she told Richard, "and stay with father, you'll grow rich and fat, and forget the state of your soul."

"I thought you didn't believe in souls."

She flushed faintly. "I believe in yours. But your Eve doesn't. She likes you because you don't care, and everybody else does. And that isn't love."

"What is love?"

She pondered. "I don't know. I've never felt it. And I don't want to feel it. If I loved too much I should die—and if I didn't love enough I should be ashamed."

"You are a queer child, Marie-Louise."

"I am not a child. Dad thinks I am, and mother. But they don't know."

There were day lilies growing about the sun-dial. She gathered a handful of white blooms and laid them at the feet of the piping Pan. "I shall write a poem about it," she said, "of a girl who loved a marble god, and who found it—enough. Every day

she laid a flower at his feet. And a human came to woo her, and she told him, 'If I loved you, you would ask more of me than my marble lover. He asks only that I lay flowers at his feet.'"

He could never be sure whether she was in jest or earnest. And now she narrowed her eyes in a quizzical smile and was gone.

He spoke of Marie-Louise to Eve. "She hasn't enough to do. She ought to be busy with her fancy work and her household matters."

"No woman is busy with household matters in this age, Dicky. Nor with fancy work. Is that what you expect of a wife?"

He didn't know what he expected, and he told her so. But he knew he was expecting more than she was prepared to give. Eve had an off-with-the-old-and-on-with-the-new theory of living which left him breathless. She expressed it one night when she said that she shouldn't have "obey" in her marriage service. "I never expect to mind you, Dicky, so what's the use?"

There was no use, of course. Yet he had a feeling that he was being robbed of something sweet and sacred. The quaint old service asked things of men as well as of women. Good and loving and fine things. He was old-fashioned enough to want to promise all that it asked, and to have his wife promise.

Eve laughed, too, at Richard's grace before meat. "You mustn't embarrass me at formal dinners,

Dicky. Somehow it won't seem quite in keeping with the cocktails, will it?"

Thus the spirit of Eve, contending with all that made him the son of his mother, meeting his spiritual revolts with material arguments, banking the fires of his flaming aspirations!

Yet he rarely let himself dwell upon this aspect of it. He had set his feet in a certain path, and he was prepared to follow it.

On this path, at every turning, he met Philip. The big man had not been driven from the field by the fact of Eve's engagement. He still asked her to go with him, he still planned pleasures for her. His money made things easy, and while he included Richard in most of his plans, he looked upon him as a necessary evil. Eve refused to go without her young doctor.

Now and then, however, he had her alone. "Dicky's called to an appendicitis case," she informed him ruefully, one night over the telephone, "and I am dead lonesome. Come and cheer me up."

He went to her, and during the evening proposed a week-end yachting trip which should take them to the North Shore and Aunt Maude.

"Is Dicky invited?"

"Of course. But I'm not sure that I want him."

"He wouldn't come if he knew that you felt like that."

"It isn't anything personal. And you know my manner is perfect when I'm with him."

"Yes. Poor Dicky. Pip, we are a pair of deceivers. I sometimes think I ought to tell him."

"There's nothing to tell."

"Nothing tangible,—but he's so straightforward. And he'd hate the idea that I'm letting you—make love to me."

"I don't make love. I have never touched the tip of your finger."

"*Pip!* Of course not. But your eyes make love, and your manner—and deep down in my heart I am afraid."

"Afraid of what?"

"That Fate isn't going to give me what I want. I don't want you, Pip. I want Dicky. And if you loved me—you'd let me alone."

"Tell me to go,—and I won't come back."

"Not ever?"

"Never."

She weakened. "But I don't want you to go away. You see, you are my good friend, Pip."

She should not have let him stay. She knew that. She found it necessary to apologize to Richard. "You see, Pip cares an awful lot."

Richard had little sympathy. "He might as well take his medicine and not hang around you, Eve."

"If you would hang around a little more perhaps he wouldn't."

"I am very busy. You know that."

His voice was stern. "If I am a busy husband, will you make that an excuse for having Pip at your heels?"

"*Richard.*"

"I beg your pardon. I shouldn't have said that. But marriage to me means more than good times. Life means more than good times. When I am here in New York it seems to me sometimes that I am drugged by work and pleasure. That there isn't a moment in which to live in a leisurely thoughtful sense."

"You should have stayed at Crossroads."

"I can't go back. I have burned my bridges. Austin expects things of me, and I must live up to his expectations. And, besides, I like it."

"Really, Dicky?"

"Really. There's a stimulus about the rush of it and the big things we are doing. Austin is a giant. My association with him is the biggest thing that has ever come into my life."

"Bigger than your love for me?"

Thus she brought him back to it. Making always demands upon him which he could not meet. He found himself harassed by her continued harping on the personal point of view, yet there were moments when she swung him into step with her. And one of the moments came when she spoke of the yachting trip. It was very hot, and Richard loved the sea.

"Dicky, I'll keep Pip in the background if you'll promise to come."

"How can you keep him in the background when he is our host?"

"He is going to invite Marie-Louise. And he'll have to be nice to her. And you and I——! Dicky, we'll feel the slap of the breeze in our faces, and forget that there's a big city back of us with sick people in it, and slums and hot nights. Dicky —I love you—and I am going to be your wife. Won't you come—because I want you—*Dicky?*"

There were tears on her cheeks as she made her plea, and he was always moved by her tears. It was his protective sense that had first tied him to her; it was still through his chivalry that she made her most potent appeal.

Marie-Louise was glad to go. "It will be like watching a play."

She and Richard were waiting for Pip's "Mermaid" to make a landing at the pier at Rose Acres. A man-servant with their bags stood near, and Marie-Louise's maid was coated and hatted to accompany her mistress. "It will be like watching a play," Marie-Louise repeated. "The eternal trio. Two men and a girl."

She waved to the quartette on the forward deck. "Your big man looks fine in his yachting things. And your Eve is nice in white."

Marie-Louise was not in white. In spite of the

heat she was wrapped to the ears in a great coat of pale buff. On her head was a Chinese hat of yellow straw, with a peacock's feather. Yet in spite of the blueness and yellowness, and the redness of her head, she preserved that air of amazing coolness, as if her blood were mixed with snow and ran slowly.

Arriving on deck, she gave Pip her hand. "I am glad it is clear. I hate storms. I am going to ask Dr. Brooks to pray that it won't be rough. He is a good man, and the gods should listen."

CHAPTER XVII

In Which Fear Walks in a Storm.

THE "Mermaid," having swept like a bird out of the harbor, stopped at Coney Island. Marie-Louise wanted her fortune told. Eve wanted peanuts and pop-corn. "It will make me seem a little girl again."

Marie-Louise, cool in her buff coat, shrugged her shoulders. "I was never allowed to be that kind of a little girl," she said, "but I think I'd like to try it for a day."

Eve and Marie-Louise got on very well together. They spoke the same language. And if Marie-Louise was more artificial in some ways, she was more open than Eve.

"You'd better tell Dr. Brooks," she told the older girl, as the two of them walked ahead of Richard and Pip on the pier. Tony and Winifred had elected to stay on board.

"Tell him what?"

"That you are keeping the big man in reserve.

Eve flushed. "Marie-Louise, you're horrid."

"I am honest," was the calm response.

Pip bought them unlimited peanuts and pop-corn, and Marie-Louise piloted them to the tent of a fat Armenian who told fortunes.

In spite of his fatness, however, he was immaculate in European clothing; he charged exorbitantly and achieved extraordinary results.

"He said the last time that I should marry a poet," Marie-Louise informed them, "which isn't true. I am not going to be married at all. But it amuses me to hear him."

The black eyes of the fat Armenian twinkled. "There will be a time when you will not be amused. You will be married."

He pulled out a chair for her. "Will your friends stay while I tell you the rest?"

"No, they are children; they want to buy peanuts and pop-corn—they want to play."

The others laughed. But the fat Armenian did not laugh. "Your soul is old!"

"You see," she asked the others, "what I mean? He says things like that to me. He told me once that in a former incarnation I had walked beside the Nile and had loved a king."

"A king-poet," the man corrected.

"Will you tell mine?" Eve asked suddenly.

"Certainly, madam."

"I am mademoiselle. You go first, Marie-Louise."

But Marie-Louise insisted on yielding to her "We will come back for you."

Coming back, they found Eve in an irritable temper. "He told me—nothing."

"I told you what you did not want to hear. But I told you the truth."

"I don't believe in such things." Eve was lofty. Her cold eyes challenged the Oriental. "I don't believe you know anything about it."

"If Mademoiselle will write it down——" He was fat and puffy, but he had a sort of large dignity which ignored her rudeness. "If Mademoiselle will write it down, she will not say—next year—'I do not believe.'"

She shivered. "I wish I hadn't come. Dicky boy, let's go and play. Pip and Marie-Louise can stay if they like it. I don't."

When Marie-Louise had had her imagination once more fed on poets, kings, and previous incarnations, she and Pip went forth to seek the others.

"I wonder what he told Eve?" Pip speculated.

Marie-Louise spoke with shrewdness. "He probably told her that she would marry you—only he wouldn't put it that way. He would say that in reaching for a star she would stumble on a diamond."

"And is Brooks the star?"

She nodded, grinning. "And you are the diamond. It is what she wants—diamonds."

"She wants more than that"—tenderness crept into his voice—"she wants love—and I can give it.'

"She wants Dr. Brooks. 'Most any woman would," said Marie-Louise cruelly. "We all know he is different. You know it, and I know it, and Eve knows it. He is bigger in some ways, and better!"

They found Eve and Richard in a pavilion dancing in strange company, to raucous music. Later the four of them rode on a merry-go-round, with Marie-Louise on a dolphin and Eve on a swan, with the two men mounted on twin dragons. They ate chowder and broiled lobster in a restaurant high in a fantastic tower. They swept up painted Alpine slopes in reckless cars, they drifted through dark tunnels in gorgeous gondolas. Eve took her pleasures with a sort of feverish enthusiasm, Marie-Louise with the air of a skeptic trying out a new thing.

"Mother would faint and fade away if she knew I was here," Marie-Louise told Richard as she sat next to him in a movie show, "and so would Dad. He would object to the germs and she would object to the crowd. Mother is like a flower in a sunlighted garden. She can't imagine that a lily could grow with its feet in the mud. But they do. And Dad knows it. But he likes to have mother stay in the sunlighted garden. He would never have fallen in love with her if her roots had been in the mud."

She was murmuring this into Richard's ear. Eve was on the other side of him, with Pip beyond.

"I've never had a day like this," Marie-Louise

further confided, "and I am not sure that I like it. It seems so far away from—Pan—and the trees—and the river."

Her voice dropped into silence, and Richard sat there beside her like a stone, seeing nothing of the pictures thrown on the screen. He saw a road which led between spired cedars, he saw an old house with a wide porch. He saw a golden-lighted table, and his mother's face across the candles. He saw a girl in a brown coat scattering food for the birds with a kind little hand—he heard the sound of a bell!

When they reached the yacht, Winifred was dressed for dinner, and Eve and Marie-Louise scurried below to change. They dined on the upper deck by moonlight, and sat late enjoying the still warmth of the night. There was no wind and they seemed to sail through silver waters.

Marie-Louise sang for them. Strange little songs for which she had composed both words and music. They had haunting cadences, and Pip told her "For Heaven's sake, kiddie, cheer up. You are making us cry."

She laughed, and gave them a group of old nursery rhymes. Most of them had to do with things to eat. There was the Dame who baked her pies "on Christmas day in the morning," and the Queen who made the tarts, and Jenny Wren and her currant wine.

"They are what I call appetizing," she said

quaintly. "When I was a tiny tot Dad kept me on a diet. I was never allowed to eat pies or tarts or puddings. So I used to feast vicariously on my nursery rhymes."

They laughed, as she had meant they should, and Pip said, "Give us another," so she chanted with increasing dramatic effect the story of King Arthur.

> "A bag pudding the king did make,
> And stuffed it well with plums,
> And in it put great hunks of fat,
> As big as my two thumbs ——"

"Think of the effect of those hunks of fat," she explained amid their roars of laughter, "on my dieted mind."

"I hate to think of things to eat," Eve said. "And I can't imagine myself cooking—in a kitchen."

"Where else would you cook?" Marie-Louise demanded practically. "I'd like it. I went once with my nurse to her mother's house, and she was cooking ham and frying eggs and we sat down to a table with a red cloth and had the ham and eggs with great slices of bread and strong tea. My nurse let me eat all I wanted, because her mother said it wouldn't hurt me, and it didn't. But my mother never knew. And always after that I liked to think of Lucy's mother and that warm nice kitchen, and the plump, pleasant woman and the ham and eggs and tea."

She was very serious, but they roared again. She was so far away from anything that was homely and housewifely, with her red hair peaked up to a high knot, her thick white coat with its black animal skin enveloping her shoulders, the gleam of silver slippers.

"Dicky," Eve said, "I hope you are not expecting me to cook in Arcadia."

"I don't expect anything."

"Every man expects something," Winifred interposed; "subconsciously he wants a hearth-woman. That's the primitive."

"I don't want a hearth-woman," Pip announced.

Dutton Ames chuckled. "You're a stone-age man, Meade. You'd like to woo with a club, and carry the day's kill to the woman in your tent."

A quick fire lighted Pip's eyes. "Jove, it wouldn't be bad, would it? What do you think, Eve?"

"I like your yacht better, and your chef and your alligator pears, and caviar."

An hour later Eve and Richard were alone on deck. The others had gone down. The lovers had preferred the moonlight.

"Eve, old lady," Richard said, "you know that even with Austin's help I'm not going to be a Crœsus. There won't be yachts—and chefs—and alligator pears."

"Jealous, Dicky?"

"No. But you've always had these things, Eve."

"I shall still have them. Aunt Maude won't let us suffer. She's a good old soul."

"Do you think I shall care to partake of Aunt Maude's bounty?"

"Perhaps not. But I am not so stiff-necked. Oh, Ducky Dick, do you think that I am going to let you keep on being poor and priggish and steady-minded?"

"Am I that, Eve?"

"You know you are."

Her laughing eyes challenged him. He would have been less than a man if he had not responded to the appeal of her youth and beauty. "Dicky," she said, "when we are married I am going to give you the time of your young life. All work and no play will make you a dull boy, Dicky."

In the night the clouds came up over the moon, and when the late and lazy party appeared on deck for luncheon, Marie-Louise complained. "I hate it this way. There's going to be a storm."

There was a storm before night. It blew up tearingly from the south and there was menace in it and madness.

Winifred and Eve were good sailors. But Marie-Louise went to pieces. She was frantic with fear, and as the night wore on, Richard found himself much concerned for her.

She insisted on staying on deck. "I feel like a rat in a trap when I am inside. I want to face it."

The wind was roaring about them. The sea was black and the sky was black, a thick velvety black that turned to copper when the lightning came.

"Aren't you afraid?" Marie-Louise demanded; "aren't you?"

"No."

"Why shouldn't you be? Why shouldn't anybody be?"

"My nerves are strong, Marie-Louise."

"It isn't nerves. It's faith. You believe that the boat won't go down, and you believe that if it did go down your soul wouldn't die."

Her white face was close to him. "I wish I could believe like that," she said in a high, sharp voice. Then she screamed as the little ship seemed caught up into the air and flung down again.

"Hush," Richard told her; "hush, Marie-Louise."

She was shaking and shivering. "I hate it," she sobbed.

Pip, like a yellow specter in oilskins, came up to them. "Eve wants you, Brooks," he shouted above the clamor of wind and wave.

"Shall we go in, Marie-Louise?"

"No, no." She cowered against his arm.

Over her head Richard said to Pip, "I shall come as soon as I can."

So Pip went down, and the two were left alone in the tumult and blackness of the night.

As Marie-Louise lay for a moment quiet against

his arm, Richard bent down to her. "Are you still afraid?"

"Yes, oh, yes. I keep thinking—if I should die. And I am afraid to die."

"You are not going to die. And if you were there would be nothing to fear. Death is just—falling asleep. Rarely any terror. We doctors know, who see people die. I know it, and your father knows it."

By the light of a blinding flash he saw her white face with its wet red hair.

"Dad doesn't know it as you know," she said, chokingly. "He couldn't say it as you—say it."

"Why not?"

"He's like I am. *Dad's afraid.*"

The storm swept on, leaving the waves rough behind it, and Richard at last put Marie-Louise to bed with a sleeping powder. Then he went to hunt up Eve. He was very tired and it was very late. The night had passed, and the dawn would soon be coming up over the horizon. He found Pip in the smoking room. Eve had gone to bed. Everybody had gone to bed. It had been a terrible storm.

Richard agreed that it had been terrible. He was glad that Eve could sleep. He couldn't understand why Austin had allowed Marie-Louise to take such a trip. Her fear of storms was evidently quite uncontrollable. And she was at all times hysterical and high-strung.

Pip was not interested in Marie-Louise. "Eve lost her nerve at the last."

Richard was solicitous. "I'm sorry. I wanted to come down, but I couldn't leave Marie-Louise. Eve's normal, and she'll be all right as soon as the storm stops. But Marie-Louise may suffer for days. The sooner she gets on shore the better."

He went on deck, and looked out upon a gray wind-swept world.

Then the sun came up, and there was a great light upon the waters.

All the next day Marie-Louise lay in a long chair. "Dad told me not to come," she confessed to Richard. "I've been this way before. But I wouldn't listen."

"If I had been your father," Richard said, "you would have listened, and you would have stayed at home."

She grinned. "You can't be sure. Nobody can be sure. I don't like to take orders."

"Until you learn to take orders you aren't going to amount to much, Marie-Louise."

"I amount to a great deal. And your ideas are—old-fashioned; that's what your Eve says, Dr. Dicky."

She looked at him through her long eyelashes. "What's the matter with your Eve?"

"What do you mean?"

"She is punishing you, but you don't know it.

She is down-stairs playing bridge with Pip and Tony and Win, and leaving you alone to meditate on your sins. And you aren't meditating. You are talking to me. I am going to write a poem about a Laggard Lover. I'll make you a shepherd boy who sits on the hills and watches his sheep. And when the girl who loves him calls to him, he refuses to go—he still watches—his sheep."

He looked puzzled. "I don't know in the least what you are talking about."

"You are the shepherd. Your work is the sheep —Eve is the girl. Your work will always be more to you than the woman. Dad's work isn't. He never forgets mother for a minute."

"And you think that I'll forget Eve?"

"Yes. And she'll hate that."

There was a spark in his eye.

"I think that we won't discuss Eve, Marie-Louise."

"Then I'll discuss her in a poem. Lend me a pencil, please."

He gave her the pencil and a prescription pad, and she set to work. She read snatches to him as she progressed. It was remarkably clever, with a constantly recurring refrain.

"*Let me watch my sheep*," *said the lover*, "*my sheep on the hills.*"

The verses went on to relate that the girl, finding her shepherd dilatory, turned her attention to another swain, and at last she flouts the shepherd.

"*Go watch your sheep, laggard lover, your sheep on the hills.*"

She laid the verses aside as Tony and Win joined them.

"Three rubbers, and Pip and Eve are ahead."

"Isn't Eve coming?"

"She said she was coming up soon."

But she did not come, and Pip did not come. Marie-Louise, with a great rug spread over her, slept in her chair. Dutton Ames read aloud to his wife. Richard rose and went to look for Eve.

There was a little room which Pip called "The Skipper's own." It was furnished in a man's way as a den, with green leather and carved oak and plenty of books. Its windows gave a forward view of sky and water.

It was here that the four of them had been playing auction. Eve was now shuffling the cards for Solitaire.

Pip, watching her, caught suddenly at her left hand. "Why didn't Brooks give you a better ring?"

"I like my ring. Let go of my hand, Pip."

"I won't. What's the matter with the man that he should dare dream of tying you down to what he can give you? It seems to me that he lacks pride."

"He doesn't lack anything. Let go of my hand, Pip."

But he still held it. "How he could have the

courage to ask—until he had made a name for himself."

She blazed. "He didn't ask. I asked him, Pip. I cared enough for that."

He dropped her hand as if it had stung him. "You cared—as much as that?"

She faced him bravely. "As much as that—it pleased me to say what it was my right to say."

"Oh! It was the queen, then, and the—beggar man. *Eve*, come back."

She was at the door, but she turned. "I'll come back if you will beg my pardon. Richard is not a beggar, and I am not the queen. How hateful you are, Pip."

"I won't beg your pardon. And let's have this out right now, Eve."

"Have what out?"

"Sit down, and I'll tell you."

Once more they were seated with the table between them. Pip's back was to the window, but Eve faced the broad expanse of sky and sea. A faint pink flush was on the waters: a silver star hung at the edge of a crescent moon. There was no sound but the purr of machinery and the mewing of gulls in the distance.

Eve was in pink—a straight linen frock with a low white collar. It gave her an air of simplicity quite unlike her usual elegance. Pip feasted his eyes on her.

"You've got to face it. Brooks doesn't care."

"He does care."

"He didn't care enough to come down last night when you were afraid—and wanted him. And you turned to me, just for one little minute, Eve. Do you think I shall ever forget the thrill of the thought that you turned to me?"

She was staring straight out at the little moon. "Marie-Louise was his patient—he had to stay with her."

"You are saying that to me, but in your heart you know you are resenting the fact that he didn't come when you called. Aren't you, Eve? Aren't you resenting it?"

She told him the truth. "Yes. But I know that when I am his wife, I shall have to let him think about his patients. I ought to be big enough for that."

"You are big enough for anything. But you are not always going to be content with crumbs from the king's table. And that's what you are getting from Brooks. And I have a feast ready. Eve, can't you see that I would give, give, give, and he will take, take, take? Eve, can't you see?"

She did see, and for the moment she was swayed by the force of his passionate eloquence.

She leaned toward him a little. "Pip, dear, I wish—sometimes—that it might have been—you."

It needed only this. He swept the card table

aside with his strong arms. He was on his knees begging for love, for life. Her hair swept his cheek.

The little moon shone clear in the quiet sky. There was not much light, but there was enough for a man standing in the door to see two dark figures outlined against the silver space beyond.

And Richard was standing in the door!

Eve saw him first. "Go away, Pip," she said, and stood up. "I—I think I can make him understand."

When they were alone she said to Richard in a strained voice, "It was my fault, Dicky."

"Do you mean that you—let him, Eve?"

"No. But I let him talk about his love for me—and—and—he cares very much."

"He knows that you are engaged to me."

"Yes. But last night when you stayed on deck when I needed you and asked for you, Pip knew that you wouldn't come—and he was sorry for me."

"And he was sorry again this afternoon?"

"Yes."

"And he showed it by making love to you?"

"He thinks I won't be happy with you. He thinks that you don't care. He thinks——"

"I don't care what Meade thinks. I want to know what you think, Eve."

Their voices had come out of the darkness. She pulled the little chain of a wall bracket, and the room was enveloped in a warm wave of light. "I don't

know what I think. But I hated to have you with Marie-Louise."

"She was very ill. You knew that. Eve, if we can't trust each other, what possible happiness can there be ahead?"

She had no answer ready.

"Of course I can't stay on Meade's boat after this," he went on; "I'll get them to run in here somewhere and drop me."

She sank back in the chair from which she had risen when Philip left them. His troubled eyes resting upon her saw a blur of pink and gold out of which emerged her white face.

"But I want you to stay."

"You shouldn't want me to stay, Eve. I can't accept his hospitality, after this, and call myself—a man."

"Oh, Dicky—I detest heroics."

She was startled by the tone in which he said, "If that is the way you feel about it, we might as well end it here."

"Dicky ——"

"I mean it, Eve. The whole thing is based on the fact that I stayed with a patient when you wanted me. Well, I shall always be staying with patients after we are married, and if you are unable to see why I must do the thing I did last night, then you will never be able to see it. And a doctor's wife must see it."

She came up to him, and in the darkness laid her cheek against his arm. "Dicky, don't joke about a thing like that. I can't stand it. And I'm sorry about—Pip. Dicky, I shall die if you don't forgive me."

He forgave her. He even made himself believe that Pip might be forgiven. He exerted himself to seem at his ease at dinner. He said nothing more about leaving at the next landing.

But late that night he sat alone on deck in the darkness. He was a plain man, and he saw things straight. And this thing was crooked. The hot honor of his youth revolted against the situation in which he saw himself. He felt hurt and ashamed. It was as if the dreams of his boyhood had been dragged in the dust.

CHAPTER XVIII

In Which We Hear Once More of a Sandalwood Fan.

IN the winter which followed Richard often wondered if he were the same man who had ridden his old Ben up over the hills, and had said his solemn grace at his own candle-lighted table.

It had been decided that he and Eve should wait until another year for their wedding. Richard wanted to get a good start. Eve was impatient, but acquiesced.

It was not Richard's engagement, however, which gave to his life the effect of strangeness. It was, rather, his work, which swept him into a maelstrom of new activities. Austin needed rest and he knew it. Richard was young and strong. The older man, using his assistant as a buffer between himself and a demanding public, felt no compunction. His own apprenticeship had been hard.

So Richard in Austin's imposing limousine was whirled through fashionable neighborhoods and up to exclusive doorways. He presided at operations where the fees were a year's income for a poor man. A certain percentage of these fees came to him. He found that he need have no fears for his financial future.

His letters from his mother were his only link with the old life. She wrote that she was well. That Anne Warfield was with her, and Cousin Sulie, and that the three of them and Cousin David played whist. That Anne was such a dear—that she didn't know what she would do without her.

Richard went as often as he could on Sundays to Crossroads. But at such times he saw little of Anne. She felt that no one should intrude on the reunions of mother and son. So she visited at Beulah's or Bower's and came back on Mondays.

Nancy persisted in her refusal to go back to New York. "I know I am silly," she told her son, "but I have a feeling that I shouldn't be able to breathe, and should die of suffocation."

Richard spoke to Dr. Austin of his mother's state of mind. "Queer thing, isn't it?"

"A natural thing, I should say. Your father's death was an awful blow. I often wonder how she lived out the years while she waited for you to finish school."

"But she did live them, so that I might be prepared to practice at Crossroads. As I think of it, it seems monstrous that I should disappoint her."

"Fledglings always leave the nest. Mothers have that to expect. The selfishness of the young makes for progress. It would have been equally monstrous if you had stayed in that dull place wasting your talents."

"Would it have been wasted, sir? There's no one taking my place in the old country. And there are many who could fill it here. There's a chance at Crossroads for big work for the right man. Community water supply—better housing, the health conditions of the ignorant foreign folk who work the small farms. A country doctor ought to have the missionary spirit."

"There are plenty of little men for such places."

"It takes big men. I could make our old countryside bloom like a rose if I could put into it half the effort that I am putting into my work with you. But it would be lean living—and I have chosen the flesh-pots."

"Don't despise yourself because you couldn't go on being poor in a big way. You are going to be rich in a big way, and that is better."

As the days went on, however, Richard wondered if it were really better to be rich in a big way. Sometimes the very bigness and richness oppressed him. He found himself burdened by the splendor of the mansions at which he made his morning calls. He hated the sleekness of the men in livery who preceded him up the stairs, the trimness of the maids waiting on the threshold of hushed boudoirs. Disease and death in these sumptuous palaces seemed divorced from reality as if the palaces were stage structures, and the people in them were actors who would presently walk out into the wings.

It was therefore with some of the feelings which had often assailed him when he had stepped from a dim theater out into the open air that Richard made his way one morning to a small apartment on a down-town side street to call on a little girl who had recently left the charity ward at Austin's hospital. Richard had operated for appendicitis, and had found himself much interested in the child. He had dismissed the limousine farther up. It had seemed out of place in the shabby street.

He stopped at the florist's for a pot of pink posies and at another shop for fruit. Laden with parcels he climbed the high stairs to the top floor of the tenement.

The little girl and her grandmother lived together. The grandmother had a small pension, and sewed by the day for several old customers. They thus managed to pay expenses, but poverty pinched. Richard had from the first, however, been impressed by their hopefulness. Neither the grandmother nor the child seemed to look upon their lot as hard. The grandmother made savory stews on a snug little stove and baked her own sweet loaves. Now and then she baked a cake. Things were spotlessly clean, and there were sunshine and fresh air. To have pitied those two would have been superfluous.

After he had walked briskly out into Fifth Avenue, he was thinking of another grandmother on whom he had called a few days before. She was a haughty

old dame, but she was browbeaten by her maid. Her grandchildren were brought in now and then to kiss her hand. They were glad to get away. They had no real need of her. They had no hopes or fears to confide. So in spite of her magnificence and her millions, she was a lonely soul.

Snow had fallen the night before, and was now melting in the streets, but the sky was very blue above the tall buildings. Christmas was not far away, and as Richard went up-town the crowd surged with him, meeting the crowd that was coming down.

He had a fancy to lunch at a little place on Thirty-third Street, where they served a soup with noodles that was in itself a hearty meal. In the days when money had been scarce the little German café had furnished many a feast. Now and then he and his mother had come together, and had talked of how, when their ship came in, they would dine at the big hotel around the corner.

And now that his ship was in, and he could afford the big hotel, it had no charms. He hated the women dawdling in its alleys, the men smoking in its corridors, the whole idle crowd, lunching in acres of table-crowded space.

So he set as his goal the clean little restaurant, and swung along toward it with something of his old boyish sense of elation.

And then a strange thing happened. For the first time in months he found his heart marking time to

the tune of the song which old Ben's hoofs had beaten out of the roads as they made their way up into the hills—

> "I think she was the most beautiful lady,
> That ever was in the West Country——"

He was even humming it under his breath, unheard amid the hum and stir of the crowded city street.

The shops on either side of him displayed in their low windows a wealth of tempting things. Rugs with a sheen like the bloom of a peach—alabaster in curved and carved bowls and vases, old prints in dull gilt frames—furniture following the lines of Florentine elaborateness—his eyes took in all the color and glow, though he rarely stopped for a closer view.

In front of one broad window, however, he hesitated. The opening of the door had spilled into the frosty air of this alien city the scent of the Orient—the fragrance of incense—of spicy perfumed woods.

In the window a jade god sat high on a teakwood pedestal. A string of scarlet beads lighted a shadowy corner. On an ancient and priceless lacquered cabinet were enthroned two other gods of gold and ivory. A crystal ball reflected a length of blue brocade. A clump of Chinese bulbs bloomed in an old Ming bowl.

Richard went into the shop. Subconsciously, he went with a purpose. But the purpose was not revealed to him until he came to a case in which was

set forth a certain marvelous collection. He knew then that the old song and the scents had formed an association of ideas which had lured him away from the streets and into the shop, that he might buy for Anne Warfield a sandalwood fan.

He found what he wanted. A sweet and wonderful bit of wood, carved like lace, with green and purple tassels.

It was when he had it safe in his pocket, in a box that was gay with yellow and green and gold, that he was aware of voices in the back of the shop.

There were tables where tea was served to special customers—at the expense of the management. Thus a vulgar bargain became as it were a hospitality—you bought teakwood and had tea; carved ivories, and were rewarded with little cakes.

In that dim space under a low hung lamp, Marie-Louise talked with the fat Armenian.

He was the same Armenian who had told her fortune at Coney. He stood by Marie-Louise's side while she drank her tea, and spoke to her of the poet-king with whom she had walked on the banks of the Nile.

Richard approaching asked, "How did you happen to come here, Marie-Louise?"

"I often come. I like it. It is next to traveling in far countries." She indicated the fat Armenian. "He tells me about things that happened to me—in the ages—when I lived before."

A slender youth in white silk with a crimson sash brought tea for Richard. But he refused it. "I am on my way to lunch, Marie-Louise. Will you go with me?"

She hesitated and glanced at the fat Armenian. "I've some things to buy."

"I'll wait."

She flitted about the shop with the fat Armenian in her train. He showed her treasures shut away from the public eye, and she bought long lengths of heavy silks, embroideries thick with gold, a moonstone bracelet linked with silver.

The fat Armenian, bending over her, seemed to direct and suggest. Richard, watching, hated the man's manner.

Outside in the sunshine, he spoke of it. "I wouldn't go there alone."

"Why not?"

"I don't like to see you among those people—on such terms. They don't understand, and they're—different."

"I like them because they are different," obstinately.

He shifted his ground. "Marie-Louise, will you lunch with me at a cheap little place around the corner?"

"Why a cheap little place?"

"Because I like the good soup, and the clean little German woman, and the quiet and—the memories."

"What memories?"

"I used to go there when I was poor."

She entered eagerly into the adventure, and ordered her car to wait. Then away they fared around the corner!

Within the homely little restaurant, Marie-Louise's elegance was more than ever apparent. Her long coat of gray velvet with its silver fox winked opulently from the back of her chair at the coarse tablecloth and the paper napkins.

But the soup was good, and the German woman smiled at them, and brought them a special dish of hard almond cakes with their coffee.

"I love it," Marie-Louise said. "It is like Hans Andersen and my fairy books. Will you bring me here again, Dr. Richard?"

"I am glad you like it," he told her. "I wanted you to like it."

"I like it because I like you," she said with frankness, "and you seem to belong in the fairy tale. You are so big and strong and young. I don't feel a thousand years old when I am with you. You are such a change from everybody else, Dr. Dicky."

Richard spoke the next day to Austin of Marie-Louise and the fat Armenian. "She shouldn't be going to such shops alone. She has a romantic streak in her, and they take advantage of it."

"She ought never to go alone," Austin agreed, "and I have told her. But what am I going to do?

I can rule a world of patients, Brooks, but I can't rule my woman child," he laughed ruefully. "I've tried having a maid accompany her, but she sends her home."

"I wish she might have gone to the Crossroads school, and have known the Crossroads teacher—Anne Warfield. You remember Cynthia Warfield, sir; this is her granddaughter."

Austin remembered Cynthia, and he wanted to know more of Anne. Richard told him of Anne's saneness and common sense. "I am so glad that she can be with my mother, and that the children have her in the school. She is so wise and good."

He thought more than once in the days that followed of Anne's wisdom and goodness. He decided to send the fan. He expected to go to Crossroads for Christmas, but he was not at all sure that he should see Anne. Something had been said about her going for the holidays to her Uncle Rod.

Was it only a year since he had seen her on the rocks above the river with a wreath in her hand, and in the stable at Bower's, with the lantern shining above her head?

CHAPTER XIX

In Which Christmas Comes to Crossroads.

NANCY'S plans for Christmas were ambitious. She talked it over with Sulie Tyson. "I'll have Anne and her Uncle Rod. If she goes to him they will eat their Christmas dinner alone. Her cousins are to be out of town."

Cousin Sulie agreed. She was a frail little woman, with gray hair drawn up from her forehead above a high-bred face. She spoke with earnestness on even the most trivial subjects. Now and then she had flashes of humor, but they were rare. Her life had been sad, and she had always been dependent. The traditions of her family had made it impossible for her to indulge in any money-making occupation. Hence she had lived in other people's houses. Usually with one or the other of two brothers, in somewhat large households.

Her days, therefore, with Nancy were rapturous ones.

"There's something in the freedom which two women can have when they are alone," she said, "that is glorious. We are ourselves. When men are around we are always acting."

Nancy was not so subtle. "I am myself with Richard."

"No, you're not, Nancy. You are always trying to please him. You make him feel important. You make him feel that he is the head of the house. You know what I mean."

Nancy did know. But she didn't choose to admit it.

"Well, I like to please him." Then with a sudden burst of longing, "Sulie, I want him here all of the time—to please."

"Oh, my dear," Sulie caught Nancy's hands up in her own, "oh, my dear. How mothers love their sons. I am glad I haven't any. I used to long for children. I don't any more. Nothing can hurt me as Richard hurts you, Nancy."

Nancy refused to talk of it. "We will ask David and Brinsley; that will be four men and three women, Sulie."

"Well, I can take care of David if you'll look after Brinsley and Rodman Warfield. And that will leave your Richard for Anne."

Nancy's candid glance met her cousin's. "That is the way I had hoped it might be—Richard and Anne. At first I thought it might be—and then something happened. He went to New York and that was the—end."

"If you had been more of a match-maker," Sulie said, "you might have managed. But you always.

think that such things are on the knees of the gods. Why didn't you bring them together?"

"I tried," Nancy confessed. "But Eve—I hate to say it, Sulie. Eve was determined."

The two old-fashioned women, making mental estimates of this modern feminine product, found themselves indignant. "To think that any girl could ——"

It was lunch time, and Anne came in. She had Diogenes under her arm. "He will come across the road to meet me. And I am afraid of the automobiles. When he brings the white duck and all of the little Diogenes with him he obstructs traffic. He stopped a touring car the other day, and the men swore at him, and Diogenes swore back."

She laughed and set the old drake on his feet. "May I have a slice of bread for him, Mother Nancy?"

"Of course, my dear. Two, if you wish."

Diogenes, having been towed by his beloved mistress out-of-doors, was appeased with the slice of bread. He was a patriarch now, with a lovely mate and a line of waddling offspring to claim his devotion. But not an inch did he swerve from his loyalty to Anne. She had brought him with her from Bower's, and he lived in the barn with his family. Twice a day, however, he made a pilgrimage to the Crossroads school. It was these excursions which Anne deprecated.

"He comes in when I ring for recess and distracts the children. He waddles straight up to my desk—and he is such an old dear."

She laughed, and the two women laughed with her. She was their heart-warming comrade. She brought into their lonely lives something vivid and sparkling, at which they drank for their soul's refreshment.

Nancy spoke of Rodman Warfield. "We want him here for Christmas and the holidays. Do you think he can come?"

Anne flashed her radiance at them. "I don't think. I know. Mother Nancy, you're an angel."

"Richard is coming, of course. It will be just a family party. Not many young people for you, my dear. Just—Richard."

There was holly and crow's-foot up in the hills, and David and Anne hitched big Ben to a cart and went after it. It was a winter of snow, and in the depths of the woods there was a great stillness. David chopped a tall cedar and his blows echoed and reëchoed in the white spaces. The holly berries that dropped from the cut branches were like drops of blood on the shining crust.

Nancy and Sulie made up the wreaths and the ropes of green, and fashioned ornaments for the tree. There was to be a bigger tree at the school for the children, but this was to be a family affair and was to be free from tawdry tinsel and colored

glass. Nancy liked straight little candles and silver stars. "It shall be an old-fashioned tree," she said, "such as I used to have when I was a child."

Sulie's raptures were almost solemn in their intensity. Richard sent money, plenty of it, and Sulie and Nancy went to Baltimore and spent it. "I never expected," Sulie said, "to go into shops and pick out things that I liked. I've always had to choose things that I needed."

Now and then on Saturdays when Anne went with them, they rushed through their shopping, had lunch at the Woman's Exchange and went to a matinée.

Nancy was always glad to get back home, but Sulie revelled in the excitement of it all. Anne made her buy a hat with a flat pink rose which lay enchantingly against her gray hair.

"I feel sometimes as if I had been born again," Sulie said quaintly; "like a flower that had shriveled up and grown brown, and suddenly found itself blooming in the spring."

Thus the days went on, and Christmas was not far away. Anne coming in one afternoon found Nancy by the library fire with a letter in her hand.

"Richard hopes to get here on Friday, Anne, in time for the tree and the children's festival. Something may keep him, however, until Christmas morning. He is very busy—and there are some important operations."

"How proud you are of him," Anne sank down on the rug, and reached up her hand for Nancy, "and how happy you will be with your big son. Could you ever have loved a daughter as much, Mother Nancy?"

"I'm not sure; perhaps," smiling, "if she had been like you. And a daughter would have stayed with me. Men have wandering natures—they must be up and out."

"Women have wandering natures, too," Anne told her. "Do you know that last Christmas I cried and cried because I was tied to the Crossroads school and to Bower's? I wanted to live in the city and have lovely things. You can't imagine how I hated all Eve Chesley's elegance. I seemed so—clumsy and common."

Nancy stared at her in amazement. "But you surely don't feel that way now."

"Yes, I do. But I am not unhappy any more. It was silly to be unhappy when I had so much in my life. But if I were a man, I'd be a rover, a vagabond—I'd take to the open road rather than be tied to one spot."

There was laughter in her eyes, but the words rang true. "I want to see new things in new people. I want to have new experiences—there must be a bigger, broader world than this."

Nancy gazing into the fire pondered. "It's the spirit of the age. Perhaps it is the youth in you.

I wanted to go, too. But oh, my dear, how I wanted to come back!"

There was silence between them, then Anne said, "Perhaps if I could have my one little fling I'd be content. Perhaps it wouldn't be all that I expected. But I'd like to try."

On Thursday Anne met the postman as he drove up. There were two parcels for her. One was square and one was long and narrow. There were parcels also for Nancy and Sulie. Anne delivered them, and took her own treasures to her room. She shut and locked her door. Then she stood very still in the middle of the room. Not since she had seen the writing on the long and narrow parcel had her heart ceased to beat madly.

When at last she sat down and untied the string a faint fragrance assailed her nostrils. Then the gay box with its purple and green and gold was revealed!

The little fan was folded about with many thicknesses of soft paper. But at last she had it out, the dear lovely thing that her love had sent!

In that moment all the barriers which she had built about her thoughts of Richard were beaten down and battered by his remembrance of her. There was not a line from him, not a word. Nothing but the writing on the wrapper, and the memory of their talk together by the big fire at Bower's on the night of Beulah's party when he had said,

"You ought to have a little fan—of—sandalwood—with purple and green tassels and smelling sweet."

When she went down her cheeks were red with color. "How pretty you are!" Sulie said, and kissed her.

Anne showed the book which had come in the square parcel. It was Geoffrey Fox's "Three Souls," and it was dedicated to Anne.

She did not show the sandalwood fan. It was hidden in her desk. She had a feeling that Nancy and Sulie would not understand, and that Richard had not meant that she should show it.

Nancy, too, had something which she did not show. One of her letters was from Dr. Austin. He had written without Richard's knowledge. He wished to inquire about Anne Warfield. He had been much impressed by what Richard had said of her. He needed a companion for his daughter Marie-Louise. He wanted a lady, and Cynthia Warfield's grandchild would, of course, be that. He wanted, too, some one who was fearless, and who thought straight. He fancied that from what Richard had said that Anne would be the antidote for his daughter's abnormality. If Nancy would confirm Richard's opinion, he would write at once to Miss Warfield. A woman's estimate in such a matter would, naturally, be more satisfying. He would pay well, and Anne would be treated in every way as one of the family. Marie-Louise might at first be

a little difficult. But in the end, no doubt, she would yield to tact and firmness.

And he was always devotedly, her old friend!

It had seemed to Nancy as she read that something gripped at her heart. It was Anne's presence which had kept her from the black despair of loneliness. Sulie was good and true, but she had no power to fill the void made by Richard's absence. If Anne went away, they would be two old women, gazing blankly into an empty future.

Yet it was Anne's opportunity. The opportunity which her soul had craved. "To see new things and new people." And she was young and wanting much to live. It would not be right or fair to hold her back.

She had, however, laid the letter aside. When Richard came she would talk it over with him, and then they could talk to Anne. She tried to forget it in the bustle of preparation, but it lay like a shadow in the back of her mind, dimming the brightness of the days.

Everybody was busy. Milly and Sulie and Nancy seeded and chopped and baked, and polished silver, and got out piles of linen, and made up beds, and were all beautifully ready and swept and garnished when Uncle Rodman arrived from Carroll and Brinsley from Baltimore.

The two old men came on the same train, and David brought them over from Bower's behind big Ben. By the time they reached Crossroads, they had

dwelt upon old times and old friends and old loves until they were in the warm and genial state of content which is age's recompense for the loss of youthful ardors.

They were, indeed, three ancient Musketeers, who, untouched now by any flame of great emotion, might adventure safely in a past of sentiment from which they were separated by long years. But there had been a time when passion had burned brightly for them all, even in gentle David, who had loved Cynthia Warfield.

What wonder, then, if to these three Anne typified that past, and all it meant to them, as she ran to meet them with her arms outflung to welcome Uncle Rod.

She had them all presently safe on the hearth with the fire roaring, and with Milly bringing them hot coffee, and Sulie and Nancy smiling in an ecstasy of welcome.

"It is perfect," Anne said, "to have you all here —like this."

Yet deep in her heart she knew that it was not perfect. For youth calls to youth. And Richard was yet to come!

Brinsley had brought hampers of things to eat. He had made epicurean pilgrimages to the Baltimore markets. There were turkeys and ducks and oysters—Smithfield hams, a young pig with an apple in its mouth.

He superintended the unloading of the hampers when Eric brought them over. Uncle Rod shook his head as he saw them opened.

"I can make a jar of honey and a handful of almonds suffice," he said. "I am not keen about butchered birds and beasts."

Brinsley laughed. "Don't rob me of the joy of living, Rod," he said. "Nancy is bad enough. I wanted to send up some wine. But she wouldn't have it. Even her mince pies are innocent. Nancy sees the whole world through eyes of anxiety for her boy. I don't believe she'd care a snap for temperance if she wasn't afraid that her Dicky might drink."

"Perhaps it is the individual mother's solicitude for her own particular child which makes the feminine influence a great moral force," Rodman ventured.

"Perhaps," carelessly. "Now Nancy has a set of wine-glasses that it is a shame not to use." He slapped his hands to warm them. "Let's take a long walk, Rod. I exercise to keep the fat down."

"I exercise because it is a good old world to walk in," and Rodman swung his long lean legs into an easy stride.

They picked David up as they passed his little house. They climbed the hill till they came to the edge of the wood where David had cut the tree.

There was a sunset over the frozen river as they

turned to look at it. The river sang no songs today. It was as still and silent as their own dead youth. Yet above it was the clear gold of the evening sky.

"The last time we came we were boys," Brinsley said, "and I was in love with Cynthia Warfield. And we were both in love with her, David; do you remember?"

David did remember. "Anne is like her."

Rodman protested. "She is and she isn't. Anne has none of Cynthia's faults."

Brinsley chuckled. "I'll bet you've spoiled her."

"No, I haven't. But Anne has had to work and wait for things, and it hasn't hurt her."

"She's a beauty," Brinsley stated, "and she ought to be a belle."

"She's good," David supplemented; "the children at the little school worship her."

"She's mine," Uncle Rod straightened his shoulders, "and in that knowledge I envy no man anything."

As they sat late that night by Nancy's fire, Anne in a white frock played for them, and sang:

"I think she was the most beautiful lady
That ever was in the West Country,
But beauty vanishes, beauty passes,
However rare, rare it be,
And when I am gone, who shall remember
That lady of the West Country?"

And when she sang it was of Cynthia Warfield that all of the Old Gentlemen dreamed.

When the last note had died away, she went over and stood behind her uncle. She was little and slim and straight and her soft hair was swept up high from her forehead. Her eyes above Uncle Rod's head met Nancy's eyes. The two women smiled at each other.

"To-morrow," Nancy said, and she seemed to say it straight to Anne, "to-morrow Richard will be here."

Anne caught a quick breath. "To-morrow," she said. "How lovely it will be!"

But Richard did not come on Christmas Eve. A telegram told of imperative demands on him. He would get there in the morning.

"We won't light the tree until he comes," was Nancy's brave decision. "The early train will get him here in time for breakfast."

David drove big Ben down to meet him. Milly cooked a mammoth breakfast. Anne slipped across the road to the Crossroads school to ring the bell for the young master's return. The rest of the household waited in the library. Brinsley was there with a story to tell, but no one listened. Their ears were strained to catch the first sharp sound of big Ben's trot. Sulie was there with a red rose in her hair to match the fires which were warming her old heart Nancy was there at the window, watching.

Then the telephone rang. Nancy was wanted. Long distance.

It was many minutes before she came back. Yet the message had been short. She had hung up the receiver, and had stood in the hall in a whirling world of darkness.

Richard was not coming.

He had been sorry. Tender. Her own sweet son. Yet he had seemed to think that business was a sufficient excuse for breaking her heart. Surely there were doctors enough in that octopus of a town to take his patients off of his hands. And she was his mother and wanted him.

She had a sense of utter rebellion. She wanted to cry out to the world, "This is my son, for whom I have sacrificed."

And now the bell across the street began to ring its foolish chime—Richard was not coming, *ding, dong.* She must get through the day without him, *ding, dong*, she must get through all the years!

When she faced the solicitous group in the library, only her whiteness showed what she was feeling.

"Richard is detained by—an important—operation. And breakfast is—waiting. Sulie, will you call Anne, and light the little tree?"

CHAPTER XX

In Which a Dresden-China Shepherdess and a Country Mouse Meet on Common Ground.

MARIE-LOUISE'S room at Rose Acres was all in white with two tall candlesticks to light it, and a silver bowl for flowers. It was by means of the flowers in the bowl that Marie-Louise expressed her moods. There were days when scarlet flowers flamed, and other days when pale roses or violets or lilies suggested a less exotic state of mind.

On the day when Anne Warfield arrived, the flowers in the bowl were yellow. Marie-Louise stayed in bed all of the morning. She had ordered the flowers sent up from the hothouse, and, dragging a length of silken dressing-gown behind her, she had arranged them. Then she had had her breakfast on a tray.

Her hair was nicely combed under a lace cap; the dressing-gown was faint blue. In the center of the big bed she looked very small but very elegant, as if a Dresden-China Shepherdess had been put between the covers.

She had told her maid that when Anne arrived she was to be shown up at once. Austin had sug-

gested that Marie-Louise go down-town to meet her. But Marie-Louise had refused.

"I don't want to see her. Why should I?"

"She is very charming, Marie-Louise."

"Who told you?"

"Dr. Brooks. And I knew her grandmother."

"Will Dr. Dicky meet her?"

"Yes. And bring her out. I have given him the day."

"You might have asked me if I wanted her, Dad. I don't want anybody to look after me. I belong to myself."

"I don't know to whom you belong, Marie-Louise. You're a changeling."

"I'm not. I'm your child. But you don't like my horns and hoofs."

He gazed at her aghast. "My dear child!"

She began to sob. "I am not your dear child. But I am your child, and I shall hate to have somebody tagging around."

"Miss Warfield is not to tag. And you'll like her."

"I shall hate her," said Marie-Louise, between her teeth.

It was because of this hatred that she had filled her bowl with yellow flowers. Yellow meant jealousy. And she had shrewdly analyzed her state of mind. She was jealous of Anne because Dad and Dr. Richard and everybody else thought that Anne was going to set her a good example.

It was early in January that Anne came. The whole thing had been hurried. Austin had been peremptory in his demand that she should not delay. So Nancy, very white but smiling, had packed her off. Sulie had cried over her, and Uncle Rod had wished her "Godspeed."

Richard met her at the station in the midst of a raging blizzard, and in a sort of dream she had been whirled with him through the gray streets shut in by the veil of the falling snow. They had stopped for tea at a big hotel, which had seemed as they entered to swim in a sea of golden light. And now here she was at last in this palace of a house!

Therese led her straight to Marie-Louise.

The Dresden-China Shepherdess in bed looked down the length of the shadowed room to the door. The figure that stood on the threshold was somehow different from what she had expected. Smaller. More girlish. Lovelier.

Anne, making her way across a sea of polished floor, became aware of the Shepherdess in bed.

"Oh," she said, "I am sorry you are ill."

"I am not ill," said Marie-Louise. "I didn't want you to come."

Anne smiled. "Oh, but if you knew how much I *wanted* to come."

Marie-Louise sat up. "What made you want to come?"

"Because I am a country mouse, and I wanted to see the world."

"Rose Acres isn't the world."

"New York is. To me. There is so much that I haven't seen. It is going to be a great adventure."

The Dresden-China Shepherdess fell down flat. "So that's what you've come for," she said, dully, "adventures—here."

There was a long silence, out of which Anne asked, "How many miles is it to my room?"

"Miles?"

"Yes. You see, I am not used to such great houses."

"It is down the hall in the west wing."

"If I get lost it will be my first adventure."

Marie-Louise turned and took a good look at this girl who made so much out of nothing. Then she said, "Therese will show you. And you can dress at once for dinner. I am not going down."

"Please do. I shall hate going alone."

"Why?"

"Well, there's your father, you know, and your—mother. And I'm a country mouse."

Their eyes met. Marie-Louise had a sudden feeling that there was no gulf between them of years or of authority.

"What shall I call you?" she asked. "I won't say Miss Warfield."

"Geoffrey Fox calls me Mistress Anne."

"Who is Geoffrey Fox?"

"He writes books, and he is going blind. He wrote 'Three Souls.'"

Marie-Louise stared. "Oh, do you know him? I loved his book."

"Would you like to know how he came to write it?"

"Yes. Tell me."

"Not now. I must go and dress."

Some instinct told Marie-Louise that argument would be useless.

"I'll dress, too, and come down. Is Dr. Dicky going to be at dinner?"

"No. He had to go back at once. He is very busy."

Marie-Louise slipped out of bed. "Therese," she called, "come and dress me, after you have shown Miss Warfield the way."

Anne never forgot the moment of entrance into the great dining-room. There were just four of them. Dr. Austin and his wife, herself and Marie-Louise. But for these four there was a formality transcending anything in Anne's experience. Carved marble, tapestry, liveried servants, a massive table with fruit piled high in a Sheffield basket.

The people were dwarfed by the room. It was as if the house had been built for giants, and had been divorced from its original purpose. Anne, walking with Marie-Louise, wondered whimsically if there

were any ceilings or whether the roof touched the stars.

Mrs. Austin was supported by her husband. She was a little woman with gray hair. She wore pearls and silver. Anne was in white. Marie-Louise in a quaint frock of gold brocade. There seemed to be no color in the room except the gold of the fire on the great hearth, the gold of the oranges on the table, and the gold of Marie-Louise's gown.

Mrs. Austin was pale and silent. But she had attentive eyes. Anne was uncomfortably possessed with the idea that the little lady listened and criticized, or at least that she held her opinion in reserve.

Marie-Louise spoke of Geoffrey Fox. "Miss Warfield knows him. She knows how he came to write his book."

Anne told them how he came to write it. Of Peggy ill at Bower's, of the gray plush pussy cat, and of how, coming up the hall with the bowl of soup in her hand, she had found Fox in a despairing mood and had suggested the plot.

Austin, watching her, decided that she was most unusual. She was beautiful, but there was something more than beauty. It was as if she was lighted from within by a fire which gave warmth not only to herself but to those about her.

He was glad that he had brought her here to be with Marie-Louise. For the moment even his wife's pale beauty seemed cold.

"We'll have Fox up," he said, when she finished her story.

Anne was sure that he would be glad to come. She blushed a little as she said it.

Later, when they were having coffee in the little drawing-room, Marie-Louise taxed her with the blush. "Is he in love with you?"

Anne felt it best to be frank. "He thought he was."

"Don't you love him?"

"No, Marie-Louise. And we mustn't talk about it. Love is a sacred thing."

"I like to talk about it. In summer I talk to Pan. But he's out now in the snow and his pipes are frozen."

The little drawing-room seemed to Anne anything but little until she learned that there was a larger one across the hall. Austin and his wife went upstairs as soon as the coffee had been served, and Marie-Louise led Anne through the shadowy vastness of the great drawing-room to a window which overlooked the river. "You can't see the river, but the light over the doorway shines on my old Pan's head. You can see him grinning out of the snow."

The effect of that white head peering from the blackness was uncanny. The shaft of light struck straight across the peaked chin and twisted mouth. The snow had made him a cap which covered his

horns and which gave him the look of a rakish old tipster.

"Oh, Marie-Louise, do you talk to him of love?"

"Yes. Wait till you see him in the spring with the pink roses back of him. He seems to get younger in the spring."

Anne, going to bed that night in a suite of rooms which might have belonged to a princess, wondered if she should wake in the morning and find herself dreaming. To have her own bath, a silk canopy over her head, to know that breakfast would be served when she rang for it, and that her mail and newspapers would be brought—these were unbelievable things. She had a feeling that if she told Uncle Rod he would shake his head over it. He had a theory that luxury tended to cramp the soul.

Yet her last thought was not of Uncle Rod but of Richard. She had come intending to give him a sharp opinion of his neglect of Nancy. But he had been so glad to see her, and had given her such a good time. Yet she had spoken of Nancy's loneliness.

"I hated to leave her," she said, "but it seemed as if I had to come."

"Of course," he agreed, with his eyes on her glowing face, "and anyhow, she has Sulie."

Marie-Louise, in the days that followed, found interest and occupation in showing the Country Mouse the sights of the city.

"If you want to see such things," she said rather grandly, "I shall be glad to go with you."

Anne insisted that they should not be driven in state and style. "People make pilgrimages on foot," she told Marie-Louise gravely, but with a twinkle in her eye. "I don't want to whirl up to Grant's tomb, or to the door of Trinity. And I like the subway and the elevated and the surface cars."

If now and then they compromised on a taxi, it was because distances were too great at times, and other means of transportation too slow. But in the main they stuck to their original plan, and Marie-Louise entered a new world.

"Oh, I love you for it," she said to Anne one night when they came home from the Battery after a day in which they had gazed down into the pit of the Stock Exchange, had lunched at Faunce's Tavern, had circled the great Aquarium, and ended with a ride on top of a Fifth Avenue 'bus in the twilight.

It was from the top of the 'bus that Anne for the first time since she had come to New York saw Evelyn Chesley.

She was coming out of a shop with Richard. It was a great shop with a world-famous name over the door. One bought furniture there of a rare kind and draperies of a rare kind and now and then a picture.

"They are getting things for their apartment," Marie-Louise explained, and her words struck cold

against Anne's heart. "Eve is paying for them with Aunt Maude's money."

"When will they be married?"

"Next October. But Eve is buying things as she sees them. I don't want her to marry Dr. Dicky."

"Why not, Marie-Louise?"

"He isn't her kind. He ought to have fallen in love with you."

"Marie-Louise, I told you not to talk of love."

"I shall talk of anything I please."

"Then you'll talk to the empty air. I won't listen. I'll go up there and sit with that fat man in front."

Marie-Louise laughed. "You're such an old dear. Do you know how nice you look in those furs?"

"I feel so elegant that I am ashamed of myself. I've peeped into every mirror. They cost a whole month's salary, Marie-Louise. I feel horribly extravagant—and happy."

They laughed together, and it was then that Marie-Louise said, "I love it."

"Love what?"

"Going with you and being young."

In the days that followed Anne found herself revelling in the elegances of her life, in the excitements. It was something of an experience to meet Evelyn Chesley on equal grounds in the little drawing-room. Anne always took Mrs. Austin's place

when there were gatherings of young folks. Marie-Louise refused to be tied, and came and went as the spirit moved her. So it was Anne who in something shimmering and silken moved among the tea guests, and danced later in slippers as shining as anything Eve had ever worn.

It was on this day that Geoffrey Fox came and met Marie-Louise for the first time.

"I can't dance," he told her; "my eyes are bad, and things seem to whirl."

"If you'll talk," she said, "I'll sit at your feet and listen."

She did it literally, perched on a small gold stool.

"Tell me about your book," she said, looking up at him. "Anne Warfield says that you wrote it at Bower's."

"I wrote it because she helped me to write it. But she did more for me than that." His eyes were following the shining figure.

"What did she do?"

"She gave me a soul. She taught me that there was something in me that was not—the flesh and the—devil."

The girl on the footstool understood. "She believes in things, and makes you believe."

"Yes."

"I hated to have her come," Marie-Louise confessed, "and now I should hate to have her go away. She calls herself a country mouse, and I am

showing her the sights—we go to corking places—on pilgrimages. We went to Grant's tomb, and she made me carry a wreath. And we ride in the subway and drink hot chocolate in drug stores.

"She says I haven't learned the big lessons of democracy," Marie-Louise pursued, "that I've looked out over the world, but that I have never been a part of it. That I've sat on a tower in a garden and have peered through a telescope."

She told him of the play that she had written, and of the verses that she had read to the piping Pan.

Later she pointed out Pan to him from the window of the big drawing-room. The snow had melted in the last mild days, and there was an icicle on his nose, and the sun from across the river reddened his cheeks.

"And there, everlastingly, he makes music," Geoffrey said, "'on the reed which he tore from the river.'"

> "'Yes, half a beast is the great god, Pan,
> To laugh as he sits by the river,
> Making a poet out of a man.
> The true gods sigh for the cost and pain,
> For the reed that grows nevermore again,
> As a reed with the reeds in the river.'"

His voice died away into silence. "That is the price which the writer pays. He is separated, as it were, from his kind."

"Oh, no," Marie-Louise breathed, "oh, no. Not

you. Your writings bring you—close. Your book made me—cry."

She was such a child as she stood there, yet with something in her, too, of womanliness.

"When your three soldiers died," she said, "it made me believe something that I hadn't believed before—about souls marching toward a great—light."

Geoffrey found himself confiding in her. "I don't know whether you will understand. But ever since I wrote that book I have felt that I must live up to it. That I must be worthy of the thing I had written."

Richard, dancing in the music room with Anne, found himself saying, "How different it all is."

"From Bower's?"

"Yes."

"Do you like it?"

"Sometimes. And then sometimes it all seems so big—and useless."

The music stopped, and they made their way back to the little drawing-room.

"Won't you sit here and talk to me?" Richard said. "Somehow we never seem to find time to talk."

She smiled. "There is always so much to do."

But she knew that it was not the things to be done which had kept her from him. It was rather a sense that safety lay in seeing as little of him as possible.

And so, throughout the winter she had built about herself barriers of reserve. Yet there had never been a moment when he had dined with them, or when he had danced, or when he had shared their box at the opera, that she had not been keenly conscious of his presence.

"And so you think it is all so big—and useless?" He picked up the conversation where they had dropped it when the dance stopped.

She nodded. "A house like this isn't a home. I told Marie-Louise the other day that a home was a place where there was a little fire, with somebody on each side of it, and where there was a little table with two people smiling across it, and with a pot boiling and a woman to stir it, and with a light in the window and a man coming home."

"And what did Marie-Louise say to that?"

"She wrote a poem about it. A nice healthy sane little poem—not one of those dreadful things about the ashes of dead women which I found her doing when I came."

"How did you cure her?"

"I am giving her real things to think of. When she gets in a morbid mood I whisk her off to the gardener's cottage, and we wash and dress the baby and take him for an airing."

Richard gave a big laugh. "With your head in the stars, you have your feet always firmly on the ground."

"I try to, but I like to know that there are always —stars."

"No one could be near you and not know that," he told her gravely.

It was a danger signal. She rose. "I have a feeling that you are neglecting somebody. You haven't danced yet with Miss Chesley."

"Oh, Eve's all right," easily; "sit down."

But she would not. She sent him from her. His place was by Eve's side. He was going to marry Eve.

It was late that night when Marie-Louise came into Anne's room. "Are you asleep?" she asked, with the door at a crack.

"No."

"Will you mind—if I talk?"

"No."

Anne was in front of her open fire, writing to Uncle Rod. The fire was another of the luxuries in which she revelled. It was such a wonder of a fireplace, with its twinkling brasses, and its purring logs. She remembered the little round stove in her room at Bower's.

Marie-Louise had come to talk of Geoffrey Fox.

"I adore his eye-glasses."

"Oh, Marie-Louise—his poor eyes."

"He isn't poor," the child said, passionately, "not even his eyes. Milton was blind—and—and there was his poetry."

"Dr. Dicky hopes his eyes are getting better."

"He says they are. That he sees things now through a sort of silver rain. He has to have some one write for him. His little sister Mimi has been doing it, but she is going to be married."

"Mimi?"

"Yes. He found out that she had a lover, and so he has insisted. And then he will be left alone."

She sat gazing into the fire, a small humped-up figure in a gorgeous dressing-gown. At last she said, "Why didn't you love him?"

"There was some one else, Marie-Louise."

Marie-Louise drew close and laid her red head on Anne's knee. "Some one that you are going to marry?"

Anne shook her head. "Some one whom I shall never marry. He loves—another girl, Marie-Louise."

"Oh!" There was a long silence, as the two of them gazed into the fire. Then Marie-Louise reached up a thin little hand to Anne's warm clasp. "That's always the way, isn't it? It is a sort of game, with Love always flitting away to—another girl."

CHAPTER XXI

In Which St. Michael Hears a Call.

IT was in April that Geoffrey Fox wrote to Anne.

"When I told you that I was coming back to Bower's, I said that I wanted quiet to think out my new book, but I did not tell you that I fancied I might find your ghost flitting through the halls, or on the road to the schoolhouse. I felt that there might linger in the long front room the glowing spirit of the little girl who sat by the fire and talked to me of my soldiers and their souls.

"And what I thought has come true. You are everywhere, Mistress Anne, not as I last saw you at Rose Acres in silken attire, but fluttering before me in your frock of many flounces, carrying your star of a lantern through the twilight on your way to Diogenes, scolding me on the stairs——! What days, what hours! And always you were the little school-teacher, showing your wayward scholars what to do with life!

"Perhaps I have done with it less than you expected. But at least I have done more with it than I had hoped. I am lining my pockets with money, and Mimi has a chest of silver. That is the immediate material effect of the sale of 'Three Souls.' But

there is more than the material effect. The letters which I get from the people who have read the book are like wine to my soul. To think that I, Geoffrey Fox, who have frittered and frivoled, should have put on paper things which have burned into men's consciousness and have made them better. I could never have done it except for you. Yet in all humility I can say that I have done it, and that never while life lasts shall I think again of my talent as a little thing.

"For it is a great thing, Mistress Anne, to have written a book. In all of my pot-boiling days I would never have believed it. A plot was a plot, and presto, the thing was done! The world read and forgot. But the world doesn't forget. Not when we give our best, and when we aim to get below the surface things and the shallow things and call up out of men's hearts that which, in these practical days, they try to hide.

"I suppose Brooks has told you about my eyes, and of how it may happen that I shall, for the rest of my life, be able to see through a glass darkly.

"That is something to be thankful for, isn't it? It is a rather weird experience when, having adjusted one's self in anticipation of a catastrophe, the catastrophe hangs fire. Like old Pepys, I had resigned myself to the inevitable—indeed in those awful waiting days I read, more than once, the last paragraph of his diary.

"'And so I betake myself to that course which it is almost as much as to see myself go into my grave; for which, and all the discomforts that will accompany my being blind, the good God prepare me!'

"Yet Pepys kept his sight all the rest of his life, and regretted, I fancy, more than once, that he did not finish his diary. And, perhaps, I, too, shall be granted this dim vision until the end.

"It seems to me that there are many things which I ought to tell you—I know there are a thousand things which are forbidden. But at least I can speak of Diogenes. I saw him at Crossroads the other day, much puffed up with pride of family. And I can speak of Mrs. Nancy, who is a white shadow of herself. Why doesn't Brooks see it? He was down here for a week recently, and he didn't seem to realize that anything was wrong. Perhaps she is always so radiant when he comes that she dazzles his eyes.

"She and Miss Sulie are a pathetic pair. I meet them on the road on their errands of mercy. They are like two sisters of charity in their long capes and little bonnets. Evidently Mrs. Brooks feels that if her son cannot doctor the community she can at least nurse it. The country folks adore her, and go to her for advice, so that Crossroads still opens wide its doors to the people, as it did in the days of old Dr. Brooks.

"And now, does the Princess still serve? I can

see you with your blue bowl on your way to Peggy, and stopping on the stairs to light for me the torch of inspiration. And now all of this service and inspiration is being spilled at the feet of—Marie-Louise! Will you give her greetings, and ask her how soon I may come and worship at the shrine of her grinning old god?"

Anne, carrying his letter to Marie-Louise, asked, "Shall I tell him to come?"

"Yes. I didn't want him to go away, but he said he must—that he couldn't write here. But I knew why he went, and you knew."

"You needn't look at me so reproachfully, Marie-Louise. It isn't my fault.'

"It is your fault," Marie-Louise accused her, "for being like a flame. Father says that people hold out their hands to you as they do to a fire."

"And what," Anne demanded, "has all this to do with Geoffrey Fox?"

"You know," Marie-Louise told her bluntly, "he loves you and looks up to you—and I—sit at his feet."

There was something of tenseness in the small face framed by the red hair. Anne touched Marie-Louise's cheek with a tender finger. "Dear heart," she said, "he is just a man."

For a moment the child stood very still, then she said, "Is he? Or is he a god, like my Pan in the garden?"

Later she decided that Geoffrey should come in May. "When there are roses. And I'll have some people out."

It was in May that Rose Acres justified its name. The marble Pan piping on his reeds faced a garden abloom with beauty. At the right, a grass walk led down to a sunken fountain approached by wide stone steps.

It was on these steps that Marie-Louise sat one morning, weaving a garland.

"I am going to tie it with gold ribbon," she said. "Tibbs got the laurel for me."

"Who is it for?"

"It may be for—Pan," Marie-Louise wore an air of mystery, "and it may not."

She stuck it later on Pan's head, but the effect did not please her. "You are nothing but a grinning old marble doll," she told him, and Anne laughed at her.

"I hoped some day you'd find that out."

Richard, arriving late that afternoon, found Mrs. Austin on the terrace. "The young people are in the garden," she said; "will you hunt them up?"

"I want to talk to Dr. Austin, if I may."

"He's in the house. He was called to the telephone."

Austin, coming out, found his young assistant on the portico.

"Can you give me a second, sir? I've a letter from mother. There's a lot of sickness at Cross-roads. And I feel responsible."

"Why should you feel responsible?"

"It's the water supply. Typhoid. If I had been there I should have had it looked into. I had started an investigation but there was no one to push it. And now there are a dozen cases. Eric Brand's little wife, Beulah, and old Peter Bower, and the mother of little François."

"And you are thinking that you ought to go down?"

"Yes."

"I don't see how I can let you go. It doesn't make much difference where people are sick, Brooks, there's always so much for us doctors to do."

"But if I could be spared ——"

"You can't, Brooks. I am sorry. But I've learned to depend on you."

The older man laid his hand affectionately on the shoulder of the younger. If for the moment Richard felt beneath the softness of that touch the iron glove of one who expected obedience from a subordinate, he did not show it by word or glance.

They talked of other things after that, and presently Richard wandered off to find Eve. He passed beyond the terraces to the garden. He felt tired and depressed. The fragrance of the roses was heavy and almost overpowering. There was a stone bench

set in the midst of a tangle of bloom. He sank down on it, asking nothing better than to sit there alone and think it out.

He felt at this moment, strongly, what had come to him many times during the winter—that he was not in any sense his own master. Austin directed, controlled, commanded. For the opportunity which he had given young Brooks he expected the return of acquiescence. Thus it happened that Richard found less of big things and more of little ones in his life than he had anticipated. There had been times when the moral side of a case had appealed to him more than the medical, when he had been moved by generosities such as had moved his grandfather, when he had wanted to be human rather than professional, and always he had found Austin blocking his idealistic impulses, scoffing at the things he had valued, imposing upon him a somewhat hard philosophy in the place of a living faith. It seemed to Richard that in his profession, as well as in his love affair, he was no longer meeting life with a direct glance.

He rose and went on. He must find Eve. He had promised and yet in that moment he knew that he did not want to see her. He wanted his mother's touch, her understanding, her love. He wanted Crossroads and big Ben—and the people who, because of his grandfather, had called him—"friend."

HER RED HAIR CAUGHT THE SUNLIGHT

He found Anne and Geoffrey and Marie-Louise by the fountain at the end of the grass walk. Marie-Louise perched on the rim was, in her pale green gown, like some nymph freshly risen. Her hat was off, and her red hair caught the sunlight.

Anne was reading the first chapter of Geoffrey's new book. He sat just above her on the steps of the fountain. His glasses were off, and as he looked down at her his eyes showed a brilliancy which seemed to contradict his failing sight.

Marie-Louise held up a warning finger. "Sit down," she said, "and listen. It is such a wonder-book, Dr. Dicky."

So Richard sat down and Anne went on reading. She read well; her voice had a thrilling quality, and once it broke.

"Oh, why did you make it so sad?" she said.

"Could I make it glad?" he asked, and to Richard, watching, there came the jealous certainty that between the two of them there was some subtle understanding.

When at last Anne had read all that he had written Marie-Louise said, importantly, "Anne is the heroine, the Princess who serves. Will you ever make me the heroine of a book, Geoffrey Fox?"

"Perhaps. Give me a plot?"

"Have a girl who loves a marble god—then some day she meets a man—and the god is afraid he will lose her, so he wakes to life and says, 'If you love

this man, you will have to accept the common lot of women, you will have to work for him and obey him —and some day he will die and your soul will be rent with sorrow. But if you love me, I shall be here when you are forgotten, and while you live my love will demand nothing but the verses that you read to me and the roses that lay at my feet.'"

Geoffrey gave her an eager glance. "Jove, there's more in that than a joke. Some day I shall get you to amplify your idea."

"I'll give it to you if you promise to write the book here. There's a balcony room that overlooks the river—and nobody would ever interrupt you but me, and I'd only come when you wanted me."

Marie-Louise's breath was short as she finished. To cover her emotion she caught up the wreath which she had made in the morning, and which lay beside her.

"I made it for you," she told Geoffrey, "and now that I've done it, I don't know what to do with it."

She was blushing and glowing, less of an imp and more of a girl than Richard had ever seen her.

Geoffrey rose to the occasion. "It shall be a mascot for my new book. I'll hang it on the wall over my desk, and every time I look up at it, it shall say to me, 'These are the laurels you are to win.'"

"You have won them," Marie-Louise flashed.

"No artist ever feels himself worthy of laurel. His achievement always falls short of his ambition."

"But 'Three Souls,'" Marie-Louise said; "surely you were satisfied?"

"I did not write it—the credit belongs to Mistress Anne. Your wreath should be hers."

But Marie-Louise's mind was made up. Before Geoffrey could grasp what she was about to do, she fluttered up the steps, and dropped the garland lightly on his dark locks.

It became him well.

"Do you like it?" he asked Anne.

"To the Victor—the spoils," she told him, smiling.

Richard felt out of it. He wanted to get away, and he knew that he must find Eve. Eve, who when he met her would laugh her light laugh, and call him "Dicky Boy," and refuse to listen when he spoke of Crossroads.

The path that he took led to a little tea house built on the bank, which gave a wide view of the river and the Jersey hills. He found Winifred and Tony side by side and silent.

"Better late than never," was Tony's greeting.

"I am hunting for Eve."

"She and Meade were here a moment ago," Winifred informed him. "Sit down and give an account of yourself. We haven't seen you in a million years."

"Just a week, dear lady. I have been horribly busy."

"You say that as if you meant the 'horribly.'"

"I do. It has been a 'bluggy' business, and I am tired." He laughed with a certain amount of constraint. "If I were a boy, I should say 'I want to go home.'"

Winifred gave him a quick glance. "What has happened?"

"Oh, everybody is ill at Crossroads. Beastly conditions. And they ought to have been corrected. Beulah's ill."

"The little bride?"

"Yes. And Eric is frantic. He has written me, asking me to come down. But Austin can't see it."

"Could you go for the day?"

"If I went for a day I should stay longer. There's everything to be done."

He switched away from the subject. "Crowd seems to have separated. Fox and Anne Warfield by the fountain. You and Tony here, and Eve and Pip as yet undiscovered."

"It is the day," Winifred decided, "all romance and roses. Even Tony and I were a-lovering when Eve found us."

Richard rose. "Tony, she wants to hold your hand. I'll get out."

Winifred laughed. "You'd better go and hold Eve's."

As he went away, Richard wondered if there was anything significant in her way of saying it.

Eve and Pip were in the enclosed space where Pan gleamed white against the dark cedars. Eve was seated on the sun-dial. Pip had lifted her there, and he stood leaning against it. Her lap was full of roses, and there were roses on her hat. The high note of color was repeated in the pink sunshade which lay open where the wind had wafted it to the feet of the piping Pan.

Pip straightened up as he saw Richard approaching. "There comes your eager lover, Eve. Give me a rose before he gets here."

"No."

"Why not?"

"I'm afraid."

"Of me?"

"No. But if I give you anything you'll take more. And I want to give everything to—Dicky."

He laughed a triumphant laugh. "I take all I can get. Give me a rose, Eve."

She yielded to his masterfulness. Out of the mass of bloom she chose a pink bud. "I shall give a red one to Dicky, so don't feel puffed up."

"I told you I should take what I could get, and Brooks isn't thinking of roses. Look at his face."

"I am sorry to be so late, Eve," Richard said, as he came up. "I am always apologizing, it seems to me."

"Little Boy Blue——! Dicky, what's the matter?"

"I want to go home." He tried to speak lightly —to follow her mood.

"Home—to Crossroads?"

"Yes."

"But why?"

"There's typhoid, and they don't know how to cope with it."

"Aren't there other doctors?"

"Yes, but not enough."

"Nonsense; what did they do before you came to the county? You must get rid of the feeling that you are so—important." She was angry. Little sparks were in her eyes.

"Don't worry, Eve. Austin doesn't want me to go. I can't get away. But it is on my mind."

"Put it off and come and help me with my roses. I gave Pip a bud. Are you jealous, Dicky?"

Still trying to follow her mood, he said, "You and the rest of the roses belong to me. Why should I care for one poor bud?"

She stuck a red rose in his coat, and when she had made her flowers into a nosegay, he lifted her down from the sun-dial. For a moment she clung to him. Meade had gone to rescue the sunshade which was blowing down the slope, and for the moment they were alone. "Dicky," she whispered, "I was horrid, but you mustn't go."

"I told you I couldn't, Eve."

Then Pip came back, and the three of them made

their way to the fountain, picking up Winifred and Tony as they passed. Tea was served on the terrace, and a lot of other people motored out. There was much laughter and lightness—as if there were no trouble in the whole wide world.

Richard felt separated from it all by his mood, and when he went to the house to send a message for Austin to the hospital, he did not at once return to the terrace. He sought the great library. It was dim and quiet and he lay back in one of the big chairs and shut his eyes. The vision was before him of Pip leaning on the sun-dial against a rose-splashed background, with Eve smiling down at him. It had come to him then that Pip should have married Eve. Pip would make her happy. The thing was all wrong in some way, but he could not see clearly how to make it right.

There was a sound in the room and he opened his eyes to find Marie-Louise on the ladder which gave access to the shelves of the great bookcases which lined the walls. She had not seen him, and she was singing softly to herself. In the dimness the color of her hair and gown gave a stained-glass effect against a background of high square east window.

Richard sat up. What was she singing?

"I think she was the most beautiful lady
That ever was in the West Country,
But beauty vanishes, beauty passes,

However rare, rare it be.
And when I am gone, who shall remember
That lady of the West Country?"

"Marie-Louise," he asked so suddenly that she nearly fell off of the shelves, "where did you learn that song?"

"From Mistress Anne."

"When you sing it do you think of—her?"

"Yes. Do you?"

"Yes."

Marie-Louise sat down on the top step of the ladder. "Dr. Dicky, may I ask a question?"

"Yes."

"Why didn't you fall in love with Anne?"

"I did."

"Oh! Then why didn't you marry her?"

"She is going to marry Geoffrey Fox."

Dead silence. Then, "Did she tell you?"

"No. He told me. Last spring."

"Before you came here?"

"Yes. That was the reason I came. I wanted to get away from everything that—spoke of her."

Marie-Louise slipped down from the ladder and came and stood beside him. "*He told you*," she said in a sharp whisper, "but there must be some mistake. She doesn't love him. She said that she didn't. I wonder why he lied."

There was nothing cold about her now. She was a fiery spark. "Only a—*cad* could do such a thing

—and I thought—oh, Dr. Dicky, I thought he was a *man*——"

She flung herself at his feet like a stricken child. He went down to her. "Marie-Louise, stop. Sit up and tell me what's the matter."

She sat up. "I shall ask Anne. I shall go and get her and ask her."

He found himself calling after her, "Marie-Louise," but she was gone.

She came back presently, dragging the protesting Anne. "But Marie-Louise, what do you want of me?"

Richard, rising, said, "Please don't think I permitted this. I tried to stop her."

"I didn't want to be stopped," Marie-Louise told them. "I want to know whether you and Geoffrey Fox are going to be married."

Anne's cheeks were stained red. "Of course not. But it isn't anything to get so excited about, is it, Marie-Louise?"

"Yes, it is. He told Dr. Dicky that you were, and he *lied*. And I thought, oh, you know the wonderful things I thought about him, Mistress Anne."

Anne's arm went around the sad little nymph in green. "You must still think wonderful things of him. He was very unhappy, and desperate about his eyes. And it seemed to him that to assert a thing might make it come true."

"But you didn't love him?"

"Never, Marie-Louise."

And now Richard, ignoring the presence of Marie-Louise, ignoring everything but the question which beat against his heart, demanded:

"If you knew that he had told me this, why didn't you make things clear?"

"When I might have made things clear—you were engaged to Eve."

She turned abruptly from him to Marie-Louise. "Run back to your poet, dear heart. He is waiting for the book that you were going to bring him. And remember that you are not to sit in judgment. You are to be eyes for him, and light."

It was a sober little nymph in green who marched away with her book. Geoffrey sat on the stone bench a little withdrawn from the others. His lean face, straining toward the house, relaxed as she came within his line of vision.

"You were a long time away," he said, and made a place for her beside him, and she sat down and opened her book.

And now, back in the dim library, Anne and Richard!

"I stayed," she said, "because they were speaking out there of Crossroads. I have had a letter, too, from Sulie. She says that the situation is desperate."

"Yes. They need me. And I ought to go. They are my people. I feel that in a sense I belong to them—as my grandfather belonged."

"Do you mean that if you go now you will stay?"

"I am not sure. The future must take care of itself."

"Your mother would be glad if your decision finally came to that."

"Yes. And I should be glad. But this time I shall not go for my mother's sake alone. Something deeper is drawing me. I can't quite analyze it. It is a call"—he laughed a little—"such as men describe who enter the ministry,—an irresistible impulse, as if I were to find something there that I had lost in the city."

She held out her hand to him. "Do you know the name I had for you when you were at Cross-roads?"

"No."

"I called you St. Michael—because it always seemed to me that you carried a sword."

He tightened his grip on the little hand. "Some day I shall hope to justify the name; I don't deserve it now."

Her eyes came up to him. "You'll fight to win," she said, softly.

He did not want to let her go. But there was no other way. But when she had joined the others on the terrace he made a wide detour of the garden, and wandered down to the river.

It was not a singing river, but to-day it seemed to

have a song, "*Go back, go back,*" it said; "*you have seen the world, you have seen the world.*"

And when he had listened for a little while he climbed the hill to tell Austin and to tell—Eve.

CHAPTER XXII

In Which Anne Weighs the People of Two Worlds.

"RICHARD!"

"Yes, mother, I'm here. Austin thinks I am crazy, and Eve won't speak to me. But—I came. And to think you have turned the house into a hospital!"

"It seemed the only thing to do. François' mother had no one to take care of her—and there were others, and the house is big."

"You are the biggest thing in it. Mother, if I ever pray to a saint, it will be one with gray hair in a nurse's cap and apron, and with shining eyes."

"They are shining because you are here, Richard."

Cousin Sulie, in the door, broke down and cried, "Oh, we've prayed for it."

They clung to him, the two little growing-old women, who had wanted him, and who had worked without him.

He had no words for them, for he could not speak with steadiness. But in that moment he knew that he should never go back to Austin. That he should live and die in the home of his fathers. And that his work was here.

He tried, a little later, to make a joke of their devotion. "Mother, you and Cousin Sulie mustn't. I shall need a body-guard to protect me. You'll spoil me with softness and ease."

"I shall buckle on your armor soon enough," she told him. "Did Eric meet you at the station?"

"Yes, I shall go straight to Beulah's. I stopped in to see old Peter before I came up. I can pull him through, but I shall have to have some nurses."

And now big Ben, at an even trot, carried Richard to the Playhouse. Toby, mad with gladness at the return of his master, raced ahead.

Up in the pretty pink and white room lay Beulah. No longer plump and blooming, but wasted and wan with dry lips and hollow eyes.

Eric had said to Richard, "If she dies I shall die, too."

"She is not going to die."

And now he said it again, cheerfully, to the wasted figure in the bed. "I have come to make you well, Beulah."

But Beulah was not at all sure that she wanted to be—well. She was too tired. She was tired of Eric, tired of her mother, tired of taking medicine, tired of having to breathe.

So she shut her eyes and turned away.

Eric sat by the bed. "Dear heart," he said, "it is Dr. Dicky."

But she did not open her eyes.

In the days that followed Richard fought to make his words come true. He felt that if Beulah died it would, in some way, be his fault. He was aware that this was a morbid state of mind, but he could not help the way he felt. Beulah's life would be the price of his self-respect.

But it was not only for Beulah's life that he fought, but for the lives of others. He had nurses up from Baltimore and down from New York. He had experts to examine wells and springs and other sources of water supply. He had a motor car that he might cover the miles quickly, using old Ben only for short distances. Toby, adapting himself to the car, sat on the front seat with the wind in his face, drunk with the excitement of it.

When Nancy spoke of the expense to which Richard was putting himself, he said, "I have saved something, mother, and Eric and the rest can pay."

Surely in those days St. Michael needed his sword, for the fight was to the finish. Night and day the battle waged. Richard went from bedside to bedside, coming always last to Beulah in the shadowed pink and white room at the Playhouse.

There were nurses now, but Eric Brand would not be turned out. "Every minute that I am away from her," he told Richard, "I'm afraid. It seems as if when I am in sight of her I can hold her—back."

So, night after night, Richard found him in the chair by Beulah's bed, his face shaded by his

hand, rousing only when Beulah stirred, to smile at her.

But Beulah did not smile back. She moaned a little now and then, and sometimes talked of things that never were on sea or land. There was a flowered chintz screen in the corner of the room and she peopled it with strange creatures, and murmured of them now and then, until the nurse covered the screen with a white sheet, which seemed to blot it out of Beulah's mind forever.

There was always a pot of coffee boiling in the kitchen for the young doctor, and Eric would go down with him and they would drink and talk, and all that Eric said led back to Beulah.

"If there was only something that I could do for her," he said; "if I could go out and work until I dropped, I should feel as if I were helping. But just to sit there and see her—fade."

Again he said, "I had always thought of our living—never of dying. There can be no future for me without her."

So it was for Eric's future as well as for Beulah's life that Richard strove. He grew worn and weary, but he never gave up.

Night after night, day after day, from house to house he went, along the two roads and up into the hills. Everywhere he met an anxious welcome. Where the conditions were unfavorable, he transferred the patient to Crossroads, where Nancy and

Sulie and Milly and a trio of nurses formed an enthusiastic hospital staff.

The mother of little François was the first patient that Richard lost. She was tired and overworked, and she felt that it was good to fall asleep. Afterward Richard, with the little boy in his arms, went out and sat where they could look over the river and talk together.

"I told her that you were to stay with me, François."

"And she was glad?"

"Yes. I need a little lad in my office, and when I take the car you can ride with me."

And thus it came about that little François, a sober little François, with a band of black about his arm, became one of the Crossroads household, and was made much of by the women, even by black Milly, who baked cookies for him and tarts whenever he cried for his mother.

Cousin Sulie rose nobly to meet the new demands upon her. "It is a feeling I never had before," she said to Richard, as she helped him pack his bag before going on his rounds, "that what I am doing is worth while. I know I should have felt it when I was darning stockings, but I didn't."

She gloried in the professional aspect which she gave to everything. She installed little François at a small table in the Garden Room. He answered the telephone and wrote the messages on slips of

paper which he laid on the doctor's desk. Cousin Sulie at another table saw the people who came in Richard's absence.

"Nancy can read to the patients up-stairs and cut flowers for them and cook nice things for them," she confided, "but I like to be down here when the children come in to ask for medicine, and when the mothers come to find out what they shall feed the convalescents. Richard, I never heard anything like their—hungriness—when they are getting well."

Beulah, emerging slowly from among the shadows, began to think of things to eat. She didn't care about anything else. She didn't care for Eric's love, or her mother's gladness, or Richard's cheerfulness, or the nurses' sympathy. She cared only to think of every kind of food that she had ever liked in her whole life, and to ask if she might have it.

"But, dear heart, the doctor doesn't think that you should," Eric would protest.

She would cry, weakly, "You don't love me, or you would let me."

She begged and begged, and at last he couldn't stand it.

"You are starving her," he told the nurses fiercely.

They referred him to the doctor.

Eric telephoned Richard.

"My dear fellow," was the response, "her appe tite is a sign that she is getting well."

"But she is so hungry."

"So are they all. I have to steel my heart against them, especially the children. And half of the convalescents are reading cook books."

"Cook books!"

"Yes. In that way they get a meal by proxy. I tell them to pick out the things they are going to have when they are well enough to eat all they want. Their choice ranges from Welsh rarebits to plum puddings."

He laughed, but Eric saw nothing funny in the matter. "I can't bear to see her—suffer."

Richard was sobered at once. "Don't think that I am not sympathetic. But—Brand, I don't dare—*feel.* If I did, I should go to pieces."

Slowly the weeks passed. Besides François' mother, two of Richard's patients died. Slowly the pendulum of time swung the rest of the sick ones toward recovery. Nancy and Sulie and Milly changed the rooms at Crossroads back to their original uses. The nurses, no longer needed, packed their competent bags, and departed. Beulah at the Playhouse had her first square meal, and smiled back at Eric.

The strain had told fearfully on Richard. Yet he persisted in his efforts long after it seemed that the countryside was safe. He tried to pack into twelve short weeks what he would normally have done in twelve long months. He spurred his fellow physi-

cians to increased activities, he urged authorities to unprecedented exertions. He did the work of two men and sometimes of three. And he was so exhausted that he felt that if ever his work was finished he would sleep for a million years.

It was in September that he began to wonder how he would square things up with Eve. At first she had written to him blaming him for his desertion. But not for a moment did she take it seriously. "You'll be coming back, Dicky," was the burden of her song. He wrote hurried pleasant letters which were to some extent bulletins of the day's work. If Eve was not satisfied she consoled herself with the thought that he was tearingly busy and terribly tired.

In her last letter she had said, "Austin doesn't know what to do without you. He told Pip that you were his right hand."

Austin had said more than that to Anne. He had found her one hot day by the fountain. Nancy had written to her of the death of François' mother. The letter was in her hand.

Austin had also had a letter. "Brooks is a fool. He writes that he is going to stay."

Anne shook her head. "He is not a fool," she said; "he is doing what he *had* to do. You would know if you had ever lived at Crossroads. Why, the Brooks family belongs there, and the Brooks doctors."

"So you have encouraged him?" Austin said.

"I have had nothing to do with it. I haven't heard from him since he left, and I haven't written."

"And you think he is—right to—bury—himself?"

Anne sat very still, her hands folded quietly. Her calm eyes were on the golden fish which swam in the waters at the base of the fountain.

"I am not sure," she said; "it all has so much to do with—old traditions—and inherited feelings—and ideals. He could be just as useful here, but he would never be happy. You can't imagine how they look up to him down there. And here he looked up to you."

"Then you think I didn't give him a free hand?"

"No. But there he is a Brooks of Crossroads. And it isn't because he wants the honor of it that he has gone back, but because the responsibility rests upon him to make the community all that it ought to be. And he can't shirk it."

"Eve Chesley says that he is tied to his mother's apron strings."

"She doesn't understand. I do. I sometimes feel that way about the Crossroads school—as if I had shirked something to have—a good time."

"But you have had a good time."

"Yes, you have all been wonderful to me," her smile warmed him, "but you won't think that I am ungrateful when I say that there was something in

my life in the little school which carried me—higher —than this."

"Higher? What do you mean?"

"I was a leader down there. And a force. The children looked to me for something that I could give and which the teacher they have isn't giving. She just teaches books, and I tried to teach them something of life, and love of country, and love of God."

"But here you have Marie-Louise, and you know how grateful we are for what you have done for her."

"I have only developed what was in her. What a flaming little genius she is!"

"With a poem accepted by an important magazine, and Fox believing that she can write more of them."

Anne spoke quietly: "And now I am really not needed. Marie-Louise can go on alone."

He stopped her. "We want you to stay—my wife wants you—Marie-Louise can't do without you. And I want you to get Brooks back."

She looked her amazement. "Get him back?"

"He will come if you ask it. I am not blind. Eve Chesley is. The things she says make him stubborn. But you could call him back. You could call to life anything in any man if you willed it. You are inspirational—a star to light the way."

His voice was shaken. After a pause he went on: "Will you help me to get Brooks back?"

She shook her head. "I shall not try. He is among his own people. He has found his place."

Yet now that Richard was gone, Anne found herself missing him more than she dared admit. She was, for the first time, aware that the knowledge that she should see him now and then had kept her from loneliness which might otherwise have assailed her. The thought that she might meet him had added zest to her engagements. His week-ends at Rose Acres had been the goal toward which her thoughts had raced.

And now the great house was empty because of his absence. The city was empty—because he had left it—forever. She had no hope that he would come back. Crossroads had claimed him. He had, indeed, come into his own.

When the rest of his friends spoke of him, praised or blamed, she was silent. Geoffrey Fox, who came often, complained, "You are always sitting off in a corner somewhere with your work, putting in a million stitches, when I want you to talk."

"You can talk to Marie-Louise. She is your ardent disciple. She burns candles at your altar."

"She is a charming—child."

"She is more than that. When her poem was accepted she cried over the letter. She thinks that she couldn't have done it except for your help and criticism."

"She will do more than she has done."

When Marie-Louise joined them, Anne was glad to see Geoffrey's protective manner, as if he wanted to be nice to the child who had cried.

She had to listen to much criticism of Richard. When Eve and the Dutton-Ames dined one night in the early fall at Rose Acres, Richard's quixotic action formed the theme of their discourse.

Eve was very frank. "Somebody ought to tie Dicky down. His head is in the clouds."

Marie-Louise flashed: "I like people whose heads are in the clouds. He is doing a wonderful thing and a wise thing—and we are all acting as if it were silly."

Anne wanted to hug Marie-Louise, and with heightened color she listened to Winifred's defense.

"I think we should all like to feel that we are equal to it—to give up money and fame—for the thing that—called."

"There is no better or bigger work for him there than here," Austin proclaimed.

"No," Winifred agreed, and her eyes were bright, "but it is because he is giving up something which the rest of us value that I like him. Renunciation isn't fashionable, but it is stimulating."

"The usual process is to 'grab and git,'" her husband sustained her. "We always like to see some one who isn't bitten by the modern bacillus."

After dinner Anne left them and made her way down in the darkness to the river. The evening

boat was coming up, starred with lights, its big search-light sweeping the shores. When it passed the darkness seemed deeper. The night was cool, and Anne, wrapped in a white cloak, was like a ghost among the shadows. Far up on the terrace she could see the big house, and hear the laughter. She felt much alone. Those people were not her people. Her people were of Nancy's kind, well-born and well bred, but not smart in the modern sense. They were quiet folk, liking their homes, their friends, their neighbors. They were not so rich that they were separated by their money from those about them. They had time to read and to think. They were perhaps no better than the people in the big house on top of the terrace, but they lived at a more leisurely pace, and it seemed to her at this moment that they got more out of life.

She wanted more than anything in the world to be to-night with that little group at Crossroads, to meet Cousin Sulie's sparkling glance, to sit at Nancy's knee, to hear Richard's big laugh, as he came in and found the women waiting for the news of the outside world that he would bring.

She knew that she could have the little school if she asked for it. But a sense of dignity restrained her. She could not go back now. It would seem to the world that she had followed Richard. Well, her heart followed him, but the world did not know that.

She heard voices. Geoffrey and Marie-Louise were at the river's edge.

"It is as if there were just the two of us in the whole wide world," Marie-Louise was saying. "That's what I like about the darkness. It seems to shut everybody out."

"But suppose the darkness followed you into the day," Geoffrey said, "suppose that for you there were no light?"

A rim of gold showed above the blackness of the Jersey hills.

"Oh," Marie-Louise exulted, "look at the moon. In a moment there will be light, and you thought you were in the dark."

"You mean that it is an omen?"

"Yes."

"What a small and comfortable person you are," Geoffrey said, and now Anne could see the two of them silhouetted against the brightening sky, one tall and slim, the other slim and short. They walked on, and she heard their voices faintly.

"Do I really make you comfortable, Geoffrey Fox?"

"You make me more than that, Marie-Louise."

CHAPTER XXIII

In Which Richard Rides Alone.

"EVE."

"Yes, Pip."

"Can't you see that if he cared Richard would do the thing that pleased you—that New York would be Paradise if you were in it?"

"Why shouldn't Crossroads be Paradise to me—with him?"

"It couldn't be."

"I am going to make it. I talked it over last night with Aunt Maude. She's an old dear. And I shall be the Lady of the Manor. If Dicky won't come to New York, I'll bring New York down to him."

"It can't be done. And it's going to fail."

"What is going to fail?"

"Your marriage. If you are mad enough to marry Brooks."

She mused. "Pip, do you remember the fat Armenian?"

"At Coney? Yes."

"He said that—I had reached for something beyond my grasp. That my fingers would touch it, but that it would soar always above me."

"Sounds as if Brooks were some fat sort of a bird. I can't think of him as soaring. I should call him the cock that crowed at Crossroads. Oh, it's all rot, Eve, this idea that love makes things equal. I went to the Hippodrome not long ago and saw 'Pinafore.' Our fathers and mothers raved over it. But that was a sentimental age, and Gilbert poked fun at them. He made the simple sailor a captain in the end, so that Josephine shouldn't wash dishes and cook smelly things in pots and hang out the family wash. But your hero balks and won't be turned into a millionaire. If you were writing a book you might make it work out to your satisfaction, but you can't twist life to the happy ending."

"I shall try, Pip."

"In Heaven's name, Eve! It is sheer obstinacy. If everybody wanted you to marry Brooks, you'd want to marry me. But because Aunt Maude and Winifred and I, and a lot of others know that you shouldn't, you have set your heart on it."

She flashed her eyes at him. "Is it obstinacy, Pip, I wonder? Do you know I rather think I am going to like it."

Her letters said something of the sort to Richard. "I shall love it down there. But you must let me have my own way with the house and garden. Don't you think I shall make a charming chatelaine, Dicky, dear?"

He had a sense of relief in her unexpected acqui-

escence in his decision. If she had objected, he would have felt as if he had turned his back not only on the work that he hated but on the woman he had promised to marry. It would have looked that way to others. Yet no matter how it had looked, he could not have done differently. The call had been insistent, and the deeps of his nature been stirred.

He was thinking of it all as one morning in October he rode to the Playhouse on big Ben to see Beulah.

Dismounting at the gate, he followed the path which led to the kitchen. Beulah was not there, and, searching, he saw her under an old apple tree at the end of the garden. She wore a checked blue apron, stiffly starched, and she was holding it up by the corners. A black cat and three sable kittens frisked at her feet.

Some one was dropping red apples carefully into the apron, some one who laughed as he swung himself down and tipped Beulah's chin up with his hand and kissed her. Richard felt a lump in his throat. It was such a homely little scene, but it held a meaning that love had never held for himself and Eve.

Eric untied Beulah's apron string, and carrying the apples in this improvised bag, with his arm about her waist sustaining her, they came down the walk.

"This is Beulah's pet tree. When she was sick she asked for apples and apples and apples."

Beulah, sinking her little white teeth into a red one, nodded. "It is perfectly wonderful," she said when she was able to speak, "how good everything tastes, and I can't get enough."

Eric pinched her cheek. "Pretty good color, doctor. We'll have them matching the apples yet."

Richard wanted to ask Eric about the dogs. "Some of my friends are coming down to-morrow for the Middlefield hunt."

"If they start old Pete there'll be some sport," Eric said.

"I shall be half sorry if they do," Richard told him. "I am always afraid I shall lose him out of my garden. He is a part of the place, like the box hedge and the cedars."

He said it lightly, but he meant it. He had hunting blood in his veins, and he loved the horses and the dogs. He loved the cold crisp air, and the excitement of the chase. But what he did not love was the hunted animal, doubling on its tracks, pursued, panting, torn to pieces by the hounds.

"Old Pete deserved to live and die among the hills," Beulah said. "Is Miss Chesley coming down?"

"Yes, and a lot of others. They will put up at the club. Mother and Sulie aren't up to entertaining a crowd."

He wanted Eric's dogs for ducks. Dutton-Ames and one or two others did not ride to hounds, and would come to Bower's in the morning.

As he rode away, he was conscious that as soon as his back was turned Eric's arm would again be about Beulah, and Beulah's head would be on Eric's shoulder. And that he would lift her over the threshold as they went in.

That afternoon Richard motored over to the Country Club to welcome Eve. She laughed at his little car. "I'd rather see you on big Ben than in that."

"Ben can't carry me fast enough."

"Don't expect me to ride in it, Dicky."

"Why not?"

"Oh, Dicky, can you *ask?*"

Meade's great limousine which had brought them seemed to stare the little car out of countenance. But Richard refused to be embarrassed by the contrast. "She's a snug little craft, and she has carried me miles. What would Meade's car do on these roads and in the hills?"

Pip had come up and as the two men stood together Eve's quick eye contrasted them. There was no doubt of Richard's shabbiness. His old riding coat was much the worse for wear. He had on the wrong kind of hat and the wrong kind of shoes, and he seemed most aggravatingly not to care. He was to ride to-morrow one of the horses which had been sent down from Pip's stables. He hadn't even a proper mount!

Pip, on the other hand, was perfectly groomed. He was shining and immaculate from the top of his

smooth head to the heel of his boots. And he wore an air of gay inconsequence. It seemed to Eve that Richard's shoulders positively sagged with responsibility.

There was a dance at the club that night. Richard, coming in, saw Eve in Pip's arms. They were a graceful pair, and their steps matched perfectly. Eve was all in white, wide-skirted, and her shoulders and arms were bare. She had on gold slippers, and her hair was gold. Richard had a sense of discomfort as he watched them. He was going to marry her, yet she was letting Pip look at her like that. His cheeks burned. What was Pip saying? Was he making love to Eve?

He had tried to meet the situation with dignity. Yet there was no dignity in Eve's willingness to let Pip follow her. To speak of it would, however, seem to crystallize his feeling into a complaint.

Hence when he danced with her later, he tried to respond to the lightness and brightness of her mood. He tried to measure up to all the requirements of his position as an engaged man and as a lover. But he did not find it easy.

When he reached home that night, he found little François awake, and ready to ask questions about the hunt.

"Do you think they will get him?" he challenged Richard, coming in small pink pajamas to the door of the young doctor's room.

"Get who?"

"Old Pete."

"He is too cunning."

"Will he come through here?"

"Perhaps."

"I shall stick my fingers in my ears and shut my eyes. Are you going to ride with them?"

"Yes."

"You won't let them kill old Pete, will you?"

"Not if I can help it."

After that, the child was more content. But when Richard was at last in bed, François came again across the hall, and stood on the threshold in the moonlight. "It would be dreadful if it was his last night."

"Whose last night, François?" sleepily.

"Old Pete's."

"Don't worry. And you must go to bed, François."

Richard waked to a glorious morning and to the hunt. Pink coats dotted the countryside. It seemed as if half the world was on its way to the club. Richard, as he mounted one of Pip's hunters, a powerful bay, felt the thrill of it all, and when he joined Eve and her party he found them in an uproarious mood.

Presently over hills streamed a picturesque procession—the hounds in the lead, the horses following with riders whose pink blazed against the green of

the pines, against the blue of the river, against the fainter blue of the skies above.

And oh, the music of it, the sound of the horn, the bell-like baying, the thud of flying feet!

Then, ahead of them all, as the hounds broke into full cry, a silent, swift shadow—the old fox, Pete!

At first he ran easily. He had done it so often. He had thrown them off after a chase which had stirred his blood. He would throw them off again.

In leisurely fashion he led them. As the morning advanced, however, he found himself hard pushed. He was driven from one stronghold to another. Tireless, the hounds followed and followed, until at last he knew himself weary, seeking sanctuary.

He came with confidence to Crossroads. Beyond the garden was his den. Once within and the thing would end.

Across the lawn he loped, and little François, anxious at the window, spied him. "Will he get to it, will he get to it?" he said to Nancy, his small face white with the fear of what might happen, "and when he gets there will he be safe?"

"Yes," she assured him; "and when they have run him aground, they will ride away."

But they did not ride away. It happened that those who were in the lead were unaware of the tradition of the country, and so they began to dig him out, this old king of foxes, who had felt himself secure in his castle!

They set the dogs at one end, and fetched mattocks and spades from the stable.

Pip and Eve were among them. Pip directing, Eve mad with the excitement of it all.

Little François, watching, clung to Nancy. "Oh, they can't, they mustn't!"

She soothed him, and at last sent Milly out, but they would not listen.

Nancy and Sulie were as white now as little François. "Oh, where is Richard?" Nancy said. "It is like murder to do a thing like that. It is bad enough in the open—but like a rat—in a trap."

The big bay was charging down the hill with Richard yelling at the top of his voice. The bay had proved troublesome and had bolted in the wrong direction, but Richard had brought him back to Crossroads just in time!

François screamed. "It is Dr. Dicky. He'll make them stop. He'll make them."

He did make them. His voice rang sharply. "Get the dogs away, Meade, and stop digging."

They were too eager at first to heed him. Eve hung on his arm, but he shook her off. "We don't like things like that down here. Our foxes are too rare."

It was a motley group which gathered later at the club for the hunt breakfast. There were fox-hunting farmers born on the land, of sturdy yeoman stock, and careless of form. There were the lords of newly

acquired acres, who rode carefully on little saddles with short stirrups in the English style.

There were the descendants of the great old planters, daring, immensely picturesque. There was Eve's crowd, trained for the sport, and at their ease.

A big fire burned on the hearth. A copper-covered table held steaming dishes. Another table groaned under its load of cold meats and cheese. On an ancient mahogany sideboard were various bottles and bowls of punch.

Old songs were sung and old stories told. Brinsley beamed on everybody with his face like a round full moon. There were other round and red-faced gentlemen who, warmed by the fire and the punch, twinkled like unsteady old stars.

Eve was the pivotal center of all the hilarity. She sat on the table and served the punch. Her coat was off, and in her silk blouse and riding breeches she was like a lovely boy. The men crowded around her. Pip, always at her elbow, delivered an admiring opinion. "No one can hold a candle to you, Eve."

Richard was out of it. He sat quietly in a corner with David, old Jo at their feet, and watched the others. Eve had been angry with him for his interference at Crossroads. "I didn't know you were a molly-coddle, Dicky," she had said, "and I wanted the brush."

She was punishing him now by paying absolutely no attention to him. She was punishing him, too,

by making herself conspicuous, which she knew he hated. The scene was not to his liking. The women of his household, Nancy, Sulie and Anne, had had a fastidious sense of what belonged to them as ladies. Eve had not that sense. As he sat there, it occurred to him that things were moving to some stupendous climax. He and Eve couldn't go on like this.

Far up in the hills a man was in danger of bleeding to death. He had cut himself while butchering a pig. The doctor was called.

Richard, making his way through the shouting and singing crowd which surrounded Eve, told her, "I shall have to go for a little while. There's a man hurt. I'll be back in an hour."

She looked down at him with hard eyes. "We are going to ride cross-country—to the Ridge. You might meet us there, if you care to come."

"You know I care."

"I'm not sure. You don't show it. I—I am tired of never having a lover—Dicky."

It was a wonderful afternoon. The heavy frost had chilled the air, the leaves were red, and the sky was blue—and there was green and brown and gold. But Richard as he rode up in the hills had no eyes for the color, no ears for the song beaten out by big Ben's hoofs. The vision which held him was of Eve in the midst of that shouting circle.

The man who had cut himself was black. He was thin and tall and his hair was gray. He had worked hard all of his life, but he had never worked out of himself the spirit of joyous optimism.

"I jes' tole 'um," he said, "to send for Dr. Brooks, and he'd beat the devil gettin' to me."

When Richard reached the Ridge, a flash of scarlet at once caught his eye. On the slope below Eve, far ahead of Meade, in a mad race, was making for a grove at the edge of the Crossroads boundaries. She was a reckless rider, and Richard held his breath as she took fences, leaped hurdles, and cleared the flat wide stream.

As she came to the grove she turned and waved triumphantly to Pip. For a moment she made a vivid and brilliant figure in her scarlet against the green. Then the little wood swallowed her up.

Pip came pounding after, and Richard, spurring his big Ben to unaccustomed efforts, circled the grove to meet them on the other side.

But they did not come. From the point where he finally drew up he could command a view of both sides of the slope. Unless they had turned back, they were still in the grove.

Then out of the woods came Pip, running. He had something in his arms.

"It is Eve," he said, panting; "there was a hole and her horse stumbled. I found her."

Poor honest Pip! As if she were his own, he

held her now in his arms. Her golden head, swung up to his shoulder, rested heavily above his heart. Her eyes were shut.

Richard's practiced eye saw at once her state of collapse. He jumped from his horse. "Give her to me, Meade," he said, "and get somebody's car as quickly as you can."

And now the tiger in Pip flashed out. "She's mine," he said, breathing hoarsely. "I love her. You go and get the car."

"Man," the young doctor said steadily, "this isn't the time to quarrel. Lay her down, then, and let me have a look at her."

He had his little case of medicines, and he hunted for something to bring her back to consciousness. Pip, pale and shaken, folded his coat under her head and chafed her hands.

Presently life seemed to sweep through her body. She shivered and moved.

Her eyes came open. "What happened?"

"You fell from your horse. Meade found you."

There were no bones broken, but the shock had been great. She lay very still and white against Pip's arm.

Richard closed his medicine case and rose. He stood looking down at her.

"Better, old lady?"

"Yes, Dicky."

He spoke a little awkwardly. "I'll ride down, if

you don't mind, and come back for you in Meade's car." His eyes did not meet hers.

As he plunged over the hill on his heavy old horse, her puzzled gaze followed him. Then she gave a queer little laugh. "Is he running away from me, Pip?"

"I told him you were—mine," the big man burst out.

"You told him? Oh, Pip, what did he say?"

"That this was not the time to talk about it."

She lay very still thinking it out. Then she turned on his arm. "Good old Pip," she said. He drew her up to him, and she said it again, with that queer little laugh, "Good old Pip, you're the best ever. And all this time I have been looking straight over your blessed old head at—Dicky."

CHAPTER XXIV

In Which St. Michael Finds Love in a Garden.

THE flowers in Marie-Louise's bowl were lilacs. And Marie-Louise, sitting up in bed, writing verses, was in pale mauve. Her windows were wide open, and the air from the river, laden with fragrance, swept through the room.

The big house had been closed all winter. Austin had elected to spend the season in Florida, and had taken all of his household with him, including Anne. He had definitely retired from practice when Richard left him. "I can't carry it on alone, and I don't want to break in anybody else," he had said, and had turned the whole thing over to one of his colleagues.

But April had brought him back to "Rose Acres" in time for the lilacs, and Marie-Louise, uplifted by the fact that Geoffrey Fox was at that very moment finishing his book in the balcony room, had decided that lilacs in the silver bowl should express the ecstatic state of her mind.

Anne, coming in at noon, asked, "What are you writing?"

"*Vers libre.* This is called, 'To Dr. Dicky, Dining.'"

"What a subject, and you call it poetry?"

"Why not? Isn't he coming to dinner for the first time since—he left New York, and since he broke off with Eve, and since—a lot of other things—and isn't it an important occasion, Mistress Anne?"

Anne ignored the question. "What have you written?"

"Only the outline. He comes—has caviar, and his eyes are on the queen. He drinks his soup—and dreams. He has fish—and a vision of the future; rhapsodies with the roast," she twinkled; "do you like it?"

"As far as it goes."

"It goes very far, and you know it. And you are blushing."

"I am not."

"You are. Look in the glass. Mistress Anne, aren't you glad that Eve is married?"

"Yes," honestly, "and that she is happy."

"Pip was made for her. I loved him at Palm Beach, adoring her, didn't you?"

"Yes." Anne's mind went back to it. The marriage had followed immediately upon the announcement of the broken engagement. People had pitied poor young Dr. Brooks. But Anne had not. One does not pity a man who, having been bound, is free.

He had written to her a half dozen times during the winter, friendly letters with news of Crossroads, and now that she was again at Rose Acres, he was coming up.

The spring day was bright. Rich with possibilities. "Marie-Louise, don't stay in bed. Nobody has a right to be in the house on such a day as this."

But Marie-Louise wouldn't be moved. "I want to finish my verses."

So Anne went out alone into the garden. It was ablaze with spring bloom, the river was blue, and Pan piped on his reeds. Geoffrey waved to her from his balcony. She waved back, then went for a walk alone. She returned to have tea on the terrace. The day seemed interminable. The hour for dinner astonishingly remote.

At last, however, it was time to dress. The gown that she chose was of pale rose, heavily weighted with silver. It hung straight and slim. Her slippers were of silver, and she still wore her dark hair in the smooth swept-up fashion which so well became her.

Richard, seeing her approach down the length of the big drawing-room where he stood with Austin, was conscious of a sense of shock. It was as if he had expected that she would come to him in her old blue serge, or in the little white gown with the many ruffles. That she came in such elegance made her

seem—alien. Like Eve. Oh, where was the Anne of yesterday?

Even when she spoke to him, when her hand was in his, when she walked beside him on the way to the dining-room, he had this sense of strangeness, as if the girl in rose-color was not the girl of whom he had dreamed through all the days since he had known that he was not to marry Eve.

The winter had been a busy one for him, but satisfying in the sense that he was at last in his rightful place. He had come into his own. He had no more doubts that his work was wisely chosen. But his life was as yet unfinished. To complete it, he had felt that he must round out his days with the woman he loved.

But now that he was here, he saw her fitted to her new surroundings as a jewel fitted to a golden setting. And she liked lovely things, she liked excitement, and the nearness of the great metropolis. There were men who had wanted to marry her. Marie-Louise had told him that in a gay little letter which she had sent from the South.

As he reviewed it now disconsolately, he reminded himself that he had never had any real reason to know that Anne cared for him. There had been a flash of the eye, a few grave words, a break in her voice, his answered letters; but a woman might dole out these small favors to a friend.

Thus from caviar to soup, and from soup to roast,

he contradicted Marie-Louise's conception of his state of mind. Fear and doubt, discouragement, a touch of despair, these carried him as far as the salad.

And then he heard Austin's voice speaking. "So you are really contented at Crossroads, Brooks?"

"Yes. I wish you would come down and let me show you some of the things I am doing. A bit primitive, perhaps, in the light of your larger experience. But none the less effective, and interesting."

Austin shrugged. "I can't imagine anything but martyrdom in such a life—for me. What do you do with yourself when you are not working—with no theaters—opera—restaurants—excitements?"

"We get along rather well without them—except for an occasional trip to town."

"But you need such things," dogmatically; "a man can't live out of the world and not—degenerate."

"He may live in it, and degenerate." Anne was speaking. Her cheeks were as pink as her gown. She leaned a little forward. "You don't know all that they have at Crossroads, and Dr. Brooks is too polite to tell you how poor New York seems to those of us who—know."

"Poor?" Richard had turned to her, his face illumined.

"Isn't it? Think of the things you have that New York doesn't know of. A singing river—this

river doesn't sing, or if it does nobody would have time to listen. And Crossroads has a bell on its school that calls to the countryside. City children are not called by a bell—that's why they are all alike—they ride on trolleys and watch the clocks. My little pupils ran across the fields and down the road, and hurried when I rang for them, and came in—rosy."

She was rosy herself as she recounted it.

"Oh, we have a lot of things—the bridge with the lights—and the road up to the Ridge—and Diogenes. Dr. Austin, you should see Diogenes."

She laughed, and they all laughed with her, but back of Richard's laugh there was an emotion which swept him on and up to heights beyond anything that he had ever hoped or dreamed.

After that, he could hardly wait for the ending of the dinner, hardly wait to get away from them all, and out under the stars.

It was when they were at last alone on the steps above the fountain, with the garden pouring all of its fragrance down upon them, that he said, "I should not have dared ask it if you had not said what you said."

"Oh, St. Michael, St. Michael," she whispered, "where was your courage?"

"But in this gown, this lovely gown, you didn't look like anything that I could—have. I am only a country doctor, Anne."

"Only my beloved—Richard."

They clung together, these two who had found Love in the garden. But they had found more than Love. They had found the meaning for all that Richard had done, and for all that Anne would do. And that which they had found they would never give up!

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